DISSENT

A Call to Radicalism

WHERE SHALL LIBERALS GO?

a book-length discussion of contemporary American politics . . . ARNOLD KAUFMAN

PAUL FELDMAN

KEEPING COOL ABOUT "BLACK POWER"

PETER SCHMID

THE PERPLEXITIES OF ITALIAN COMMUNISM

DAVID SPITZ

ON PURE TOLERANCE: A CRITIQUE OF CRITICISM

A Polemic Against Marcuse, Moore, and Wolff

H. L. NIEBURG

THE CONTRACT STATE & U.S. ECONOMY

plus a section on

THE POVERTY OF ANTIPOVERTY

Ministry of Hope? . . . Head Start or Dead End? . . . How to Succeed in Antipoverty Without Really Trying . . . Troubles in Brownsville

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1966 75c.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AMONG OUR CONTRIBUTORS

PAUL FELDMAN edits the Socialist party paper *New America* . . . PETER SCHMID, a Swiss journalist, is a roving reporter. His articles have appeared in both European and American journals . . . ANDREW KOPKIND is an associate editor of *The New Republic* and Washington correspondent for *The New Statesman* . . . HERBERT KOHL, author of *The Age of Complexity,* is a former Harlem teacher. He is presently organizing a group of teachers and writers in an effort to develop new approaches to teaching English . . . DEBORAH MEIER has taught in the Philadelphia Get Set program . . . FATHER JOSEPH B. JUDGE, former Newman Club chaplain at Hofstra College, is the administrator of Our Lady of Mercy Church in Brownsville. His articles have appeared in *Commonweal* and *Jubilee* . . . DAVID SPITZ, a professor of political science at Ohio State University, is author of three books, the most recent *The Liberal Idea of Freedom.* . . . H. L. NIEBURG is an associate professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. He has authored several books; this article is based on a portion of *In the Name of Science,* to be published this fall . . . HERBERT GANS, a sociologist and planner on the research staff of the Center for Urban Education and faculty member of Columbia University's Teachers College, is the author of *The Urban Villagers* and *The Levittowners.* . . . ALEX GARBER, an associate professor of sociology at Sacramento College, is a member of the National Committee of the Socialist Party–Social Democratic Federation. His articles have appeared in *New Politics, New America,* and other journals. . . . STEPHEN COHEN teaches political-economy at Brandeis University and is presently completing a book on French economic planning. . . . ARNOLD KAUFMAN, an associate professor of philosophy at the University of Michigan, spent last year as exchange professor at Tuskegee Institute. He has been active in the civil rights movement, the first teach-in (Ann Arbor), and in National Teach-In. He has written for *The Nation* and *Socialist Commentary.*

DISSENT issued September 1, 1966, is published bi-monthly, January-February, March-April, May-June, July-August, September-October, November-December, by Dissent Publishing Association, 509 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. Subscriptions: $4.50 for one year; $7.00 for two years; $3.50 for students for one year; foreign subscriptions, including Canada, add $1.00 mailing costs per year. All payments from foreign countries must be made by United States money orders or checks payable in United States currency. Single copy, 75 cents. For special rates on bulk orders from organizations, teachers, etc., write directly to DISSENT. For information on newsstand and bookstore distribution write to: Eastern News Co., 225 Seventh Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10001.

© 1966 by Dissent Publishing Association. Permission to reprint any article must be obtained from the publishers. • Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. • Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. • Volume XIII, number 5 (Whole No. 54).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DISSENT

SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 1966

COMMENTS AND OPINIONS

WHOSE SCRIPT ARE THEY SHOOTING BY?—*by Irving Howe* 467

THE OSWALD CASE SHOULD BE REOPENED!—*S. P.* 469

TITO, RANKOVIC AND ALL THAT—*L. C.* 470

HOW THE CRY FOR BLACK POWER BEGAN—*by Paul Feldman* ... 472

ARTICLES

THE PERPLEXITIES OF ITALIAN COMMUNISM—*by Peter Schmid* .. 478

THE POVERTY OF ANTIPOVERTY (a series of firsthand reports on the Poverty Program)—*by Andrew Kopkind, Herbert Kohl, Deborah Meier, and Joseph B. Judge* 489

PURE TOLERANCE: A CRITIQUE OF CRITICISMS—*by Daniel Spitz* . 510

THE CONTRACT STATE: GOVERNMENT IN THE ECONOMY —*by H. L. Nieburg* 526

A CALL TO RADICALISM: WHERE SHALL LIBERALS GO? —*by Arnold S. Kaufman* 555

NOTEBOOK:

THE WHITE PROBLEM—*by Herbert J. Gans* 538

A CALL TO END THE DRAFT—*by Alex Garber* 540

BOOKS

MAJOR WORK ON A MAJOR FIGURE (ROSA LUXEMBURG, *by J. P. Nettl*)—*reviewed by Lewis Coser* 544

WHO PLANS THE PLANNERS? (MODERN CAPITALISM, by Andrew Shonfield)—*reviewed by Stephen Cohen* 548

LETTERS 554

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DISSENT is a journal devoted to the ideas and values of democratic socialism. It seeks to serve as a forum for writers devoted to these ideas and values, while also welcoming a wide variety of other opinions. Each writer speaks for himself; there is no effort made to exact editorial consensus or uniformity.

EDITOR
Irving Howe

EDITORIAL BOARD
Joseph Buttinger
Lewis Coser
Emanuel Geltman
Michael Harrington
Tom Kahn
Jeremy Larner
Norman Mailer
Henry Pachter
Stanley Plastrik
Bernard Rosenberg
Meyer Schapiro
Ben B. Seligman
Stephan Thernstrom
Michael Walzer

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Lionel Abel
Stanley Diamond
Erich Fromm
Paul Goodman
Murray Hausknecht
Paul Jacobs
Sid Lens
Frank Marquart
A. J. Muste
Ned Polsky
Harold Rosenberg
Herman Singer
Norman Thomas
George Woodcock
Dennis Wrong

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT:
Edith Tarcov

A BI-MONTHLY OF SOCIALIST OPINION

The following letter has been sent to the NEW YORK TIMES MAZGAINE

Mass Slaughter In Indonesia

To The Editor:

There is something extremely disturbing about Donald Kirk's report from Indonesia in the *New York Times Magazine* for July 24, 1966. He discusses at length the prospects for a democratic development in Indonesia under the new triumvirate of Suharto, Malik and Sultan Buwono. He mentions, almost in passing, that there has occurred, either under the direct sponsorship or with the tacit connivance of this new regime, a "great purge in which some 300,000 Communists, Communist sympathizers and members of their families were killed."

But how, one wonders, can anything resembling democracy be built on the basic of such an appalling slaughter? How can a decent society be created by people who emulate some of the worst features of Stalinism? And why is it that Mr. Kirk does not seem to think it news-worthy to inquire of the Indonesian rulers what they make of this dreadful killing or how they propose to justify their relationship to it?

Now imagine if a political "purge" one-fiftieth as bloody had occurred in a Communist country. How the *New York Times* would thunder in righteous wrath! How Vice-President Humphrey would wheel out his "liberal" rhetoric to make clear our moral superiority!

(*Continued on page 553*)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENTS AND OPINIONS

Irving Howe

Whose Script Are They Shooting By?

To some people the growing escalation of the Vietnam War means a rain of napalm, mangled children, human torment, and the dread prospect of a new world war. To others it means something else. "Military planners" and certain kinds of corrupted social scientists work out a "scenario" calculating move and counter-move, expectation and counter-expectation—what will happen if "our side" gets a bit closer to the brink and how the "other side" is likely to respond. They justify this game by saying that the enemy will have to negotiate if certain pressures are put upon it and thereby the war will be brought to an end.

Suppose, however, the other side isn't shooting by the same script. Suppose it plays by another "scenario." What then are the consequences? The war grows in magnitude and horror; the dangers it brings to humanity increase. ("Some military men," reports the *New York Times,* June 30, 1966, "take the position that innocent bystanders are always being harmed in war . . .") Since it seems clear Hanoi and the Vietcong will not be strong-armed into accepting U.S. terms, what happens next? Probably a further step in the game of risk, so that now Secretary of State Rusk, the zombie warrior, hints that a military invasion of North Vietnam is not out of the question. And, in truth, as long as the present policy is pursued, it is not out of the question, for the politics and psychology of escalation have their own inner logic. It is the logic of gambling with life.

Surely there is no longer any reason, if ever there was, to trust the protestations of the Johnson Administration that it wishes to apply restrained pressure simply in order to bring about negotiations. For as James Reston wrote in the *New York Times* on July 1, 1966, the Johnson Administration

> will probably never regain the confidence it has lost in its judgment *and veracity.*
>
> With the bombing of targets on the outskirts of Hanoi and Haiphong, it has now done almost everything it said or indicated it would not do except bomb China, and the end of this melancholy chapter in American history is not yet.
>
> The Johnson Administration said it was not seeking a military solution to the war, and it is now obviously seeking precisely that. It said it was there merely to help a legitimate government defend itself, and it has ended up by supporting a mili-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tary clique that is not a government, is not legitimate, and is not really defending itself.

Even when allowances are made for the uncertainties and moral ambiguities of warfare, *the guile of this Administration,* exercised in the name of high and even noble principle, *is hard to match.* It was not going beyond the 17th Parallel in Vietnam, but went beyond. It was merely going to respond to enemy attacks on its bases, but it went over to the offensive. It was not going to get involved in a major war on the Asian land mass but it did.

The President was not even faithful to his bad resolves: He said he would not negotiate, and then offered to do so, and spoiled that by refusing to negotiate with the major elements of the enemy he faced. There seems to be no guiding principle to what he is doing; there is certainly little faith here [Washington] in the official spoken word; there is immense power but little confidence in anything . . . (emphasis added—I. H.)

This indictment is so telling that almost nothing need be added—except this: Suppose, simply to pursue the devil's argument, we play for a moment the game of "scenario" and follow the logic of the defenders of the Johnson Administration. What would the consequences of military "success" be? I do not see how they could be very different from those sketched out by the *New Statesman* in an editorial for July 1, 1966:

The most optimistic estimate is that South Vietnam will be "under control" in another 12 to 18 months. This means that, at the best, thousands of people will die, will be wounded by random bombs and burned by napalm . . . And no one can be certain that it will not be all in vain—that the hope will not be as illusory as similar forecasts made during the earlier stages of the war. But granting that it works out . . . what can victory mean? Will not a remnant of the Vietcong, even if reduced to terrorism and to sorties from remote hideouts, remain unsubdued for years, making life abnormal and justifying martial law? Will not the Americans find . . . that their troubles are just beginning? What prospect is there of the peace that proceeds from reconciliation? What is being done to give South Vietnam a government more representative than the Ky junta? The brutal repression of the Buddhists, the obviously hollow nature of the promised elections, Ky's refusal to share power with other elements—these signs are not promising.

The more escalation intensifies, the more ideology and rhetoric get out of hand. Touring the Midwest the President has resorted to the cheapest kind of demagogy—"the American people are determined to see this through," attacks on Nervous Nellies (*Nellie ain't my name, but nervous I certainly am*). At other moments Johnson and Humphrey, that pitiful echo, declare—*in accents reminiscent* of Manifest Destiny—that we are to bring "the Great Society" to Asia (at a time when our own country is convulsed by riots resulting from the desperation and humiliation of millions

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Negroes). It all becomes grotesque and ugly.

The prospect is dismal: a long, bleeding war, growing casualty lists, intellectual deceit and schizophrenia. Both sides, the United States and the Communists, share a terrible responsibility. Living as we do in the United States, we have a special responsibility to demand that the government of this country execute a sharp about-face; that it end bombings of North Vietnam and announce its readiness to negotiate with the NLF while beginning on its own an immediate de-escalation of the fighting. That we may not succeed is in no way a reason for not continuing to speak out.

The Oswald Case Should Be Reopened!

No matter what one thinks about the criticisms now circulating in regard to the Warren Commission Report, one thing is clear: the assassination of President Kennedy has not been satisfactorily explained. We reach this conclusion without judging the theories advanced in opposition to the official version, including the seemingly far-fetched one which claims the existence of a "second Oswald." Nor need the prevalent feeling that something is still rotten in both Dallas and Washington necessarily commit one to elaborate conspiracy theories.

For enough doubt has already been cast upon both the methods and conclusions of the Warren Commission to justify the demand that the case be reopened. Serious studies by persons like Leo Sauvage and Edward Epstein have, it now seems, shot wide gaping holes into the official version. These critics seek no political advantage, they serve no suspect interest; their only concern is with uncovering the truth. The various questions they have raised—e.g., how many shots were actually fired, how the shots could have been fired so rapidly from Oswald's inefficient gun, why the Commission accepted without further checking J. Edgar Hoover's assertion that Oswald had no links with the FBI—all demand clarification. And in a country where every triviality is given intense journalistic examination, it is nothing less than a scandal that the killing of a much-admired President should have been so poorly investigated and, in turn, the investigation so little scrutinized.

Reopening the case would obviously be an act of great political significance. The President and all those whose power depends at least in part on a complacent acceptance of the Warren Commission Report, would surely resist such a step. Only tremendous pressure can get the case reopened—and here Senator Robert Kennedy is a key man. Yet reopened the case must be! If it is not, there will only be a magnification of rumors and conjectures, some in good faith and others malicious.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In line with the suggestion made by Richard Goodwin, a former assistant to President Kennedy, we propose that an act of Congress establish a commission with full powers to examine all —we repeat, *all*—aspects of the case. This commission should consist not only of U.S. legal experts, but should also be given an international complexion by adding a number of international jurists, perhaps selected by the World Court or the United Nations. Many of us recall the effective work done by the International Commission headed by John Dewey, which investigated the slanders advanced against Leon Trotsky at the Moscow Trials. If a tiny harrassed political group and a few courageous intellectuals could speak for the truth then, surely an assassination which concerns the life of the entire nation deserves at least as careful scrutiny and critical examination. S. P.

Tito, Rankovic and All That

For some years now it has been assumed that when the Peoples' Democracies of Eastern Europe are compared, "they order things better in Yugoslavia." One begins to doubt it.

Since the beginning of 1966 a number of extraordinary sessions of the Central Committee of the League of Communists have been the scene of violent discussions between "reformers" and more doctrinaire Communists. These discussions have not only involved the new economic program, intended gradually to move the country from a command to a market economy; they have also brought to the fore deep-seated national antagonisms among the various peoples of Yugoslavia which Tito had supposedly overcome. Croatia and Slovenia, the richest and most developed regions of the country, seem no longer willing to let their resources be drained in order to help the poorer republics of Serbia and Macedonia. The Croats and Slovenes argue that if they could invest their profits within their own regions these could be utilized more productively.

Communist Yugoslavia, as Bogdan Raditsa has cogently argued, thus comes to resemble the old Serbian-dominated Royal Yugoslavia in which Serbian political power kept down the economically more enterprising Croatians and Slovenes. Tito's recent purge of Rankovic, chief of the Yugoslav secret police and once considered his probable successor, seems connected with this new upsurge of the age-old quarrel of Yugoslav nationalities. Rankovic is a Serb and his apparatus was apparently mainly of Serbian origin. Tito now seems to have concluded that it is necessary at least partly to give in to the demands for greater autonomy of the non-Serbian components of the country. (Under the new economic policy now adopted, more than half of all investment funds are to be retained by component republics and enterprises rather than redistributed through Belgrade.) While lament-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing the fact that "bourgeois nationalism" endangers the very existence of federated Yugoslavia, Tito seems nevertheless to have concluded that it was no longer possible to oppose a certain amount of decentralization of the powers and controls of the Belgrade bureaucracy.

Nor is the dramatic re-opening of nationality conflicts the only sign of instability. Yugoslavia also seems to suffer from a very sharp generational conflict. Just as in the Soviet Union, the ruling party is considerably older than the nation; the top political leaders are still men who won their spurs during the partisan days of the war, and the succeeding generation has not yet achieved the position of power which it considers its due. The circulation of the elites has slowed down considerably since the 1940's. What Isaac Deutscher recently wrote about the Soviet Union seems *grosso modo* also to hold true for Yugoslavia: "The Communist Party is considerably older than the nation; one half of its members are over 40. One may say that the Party is 16 to 20 years older than the nation at large. This does not make for a common language between them."

The bitter clashes between production-centered younger technocrats and power-centered older party functionaries overlap, in part, generational and nationality conflicts. The technocrats seem oriented toward a profit-market- and money-oriented economy, while the older generation of the party planners is unwilling to give up the essential levels of the command economy. What Gregory Grossman has called the conflict between "money and the sword" in the Eastern economies has reached particular virulence in contemporary Yugoslavia. And Tito, though he seems recently to have backed the reformers and their stress on economic rationality and profitability, has at the same time used the sword, in order to suppress the magazine *Praxis,* published by young Croatian "revisionist" Marxists at the University of Zagreb. The aging dictator thus continues his precarious balancing act; while supporting economic revisionism and purging the Belgrade police apparatus, he also turns against the humanist socialism propounded by *Praxis.*

Milovan Djilas, in the meantime, is still imprisoned in the infamous Sremska Mitrovica prison, his crime being that he predicted many of the present difficulties and that he spoke about them when the powers-to-be considered it high treason to blurt out a truth which has by now become common knowledge. The country, yes even its ruling party, is now paying for the decision to suppress the voice of Djilas at a time when it would have been easier to adopt a more flexible and libertarian course.

For many years the bitter tensions and conflicts that divide Yugoslav society have been methodically suppressed by the regime. This is now no longer possible; nor would it seem possible to continue for much longer the present precarious balancing act between the old and the new, between freedom and the sword. Pretty soon, but certainly after Tito's exit and the inevitable succession crisis, Yugoslavia will have to choose. And then it might become apparent that, after all, dictatorial and centralized rule is far less "efficient" than had previously been assumed. The devils that now

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

plague the regime might be more easily exorcised by free debate than by the dexterous manipulation of no matter how clever a Central Committee. The Yugoslavs might then find that the devolution of central police power, the decentralization of decision-making, the permanent dismantling of detailed central planning and the development of a truly market-oriented socialism might point the way out of the present impasse. Finally, Yugoslavia's one-party system might then slowly develop into that multiparty democracy which Djilas began advocating twelve years ago. L. C.

Paul Feldman

How the Cry for "Black Power" Began

When the cry of "black power" burst upon the American landscape, some observers ran for the hills or their shotguns, fearing it signaled the beginning of a racial war. Others, like the new leaders of CORE, hailed it as the solution for black Americans. A few people kept their heads and concluded that the slogan, while full of sound and fury, was only another symptom of America's failure to face the huge economic and social problems underlying its racial crisis.

This might have been an occasion for some cool reflection and meaningful action by the nation's leaders; but, by and large, their response was panic, or an opportunistic simulation of panic. No wonder that those who raised the slogan might have concluded that these two words have some mystical power. President Johnson, a man not noted for his pacifist qualities, responded to the July riots by warning Negroes that they are only 10% of the population, and ended with a veiled threat that if they continued to act up, he might have to stop donating their rights to them. But the real problem is that the majority of Negroes have made little or no social and economic progress since the time America and its President became civil rights conscious—and about this crucial fact LBJ kept silent.

Through the inadequacy of its approach to poverty and unemployment, the Johnson Administration has encouraged nationalistic tendencies in both the civil rights movement and the Negro community. The thrust of Administration actions thus far has been toward moderate improvement *within* the slums, rather than a fundamental program to break down ghetto walls. No; tearing down the ghetto and building new integrated communities are not the Administration's aims. Government measures, at best, are limited to improving conditions of Negro life in the confines of the ghetto. *It should therefore, not be surprising that this tendency is also reflected in the thinking of some sections of the*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

civil rights movement, particularly among those groups which have no economic program as a basis for action. The "separate but equal" echoes that can be heard in the speeches of some exponents of "black power," combined with their advocacy of "self-help" economic projects, do not signal any radical departures at all. Their ideas *could easily coexist with the consensus framework being laid down by the Johnson Administration.* The militant verbiage that frightens so many whites may well hide conservative tendencies.

II

To understand the emergence of the "black power" slogan at this time there are two things to be considered besides the narrow political-economic scope of Administration policy. These are the mood of the masses of Negroes in the North and the state of the civil rights movement.

To some extent the slogan accurately reflects moods in the ghetto. Equality was promised to Negro citizens; little has been delivered. Hopes raised by the civil rights revolution have been dashed. Frustration has accumulated.

The civil rights movement, as Bayard Rustin points out, has succeeded, through the admirable qualities it displayed in adversity, in destroying the stereotypes ascribed to the Negro by white society, that he is lazy, dirty, happy-go-lucky, without ambition and willing to accept his condition. But the movement has not been fully able to replace the old stereotypes with positive concepts and values. This is because at base the problem is not ideological or psychological, but political and economic. Negroes who no longer accept the myth of racial inferiority, still lack decent jobs, schools and housing; therefore they do not develop new concepts of themselves based on changed social roles. The psychic vacuum that now exists must be filled in the absence of real opportunities for economic and social betterment. Many Negroes therefore seize on their blackness as something of positive value—even as an indication of superior worth.

The inability of the civil rights movement to stimulate significant and concrete socio-economic gains helps along this process of compensation. What is to keep a ghetto Negro from accepting the slogan of "black power" and rejecting the non-violence of Martin Luther King if the integration movement seems no more able to change his situation than the nationalist groups? Indeed, "black power" would be at an advantage. At least it provides psychological comfort. The painful rebuffs Negroes receive from American society can then be reversed and a Negro can say "I don't want to integrate with *them,*" "I don't need any white allies," etc.

If "black power" is widely accepted in the Negro community rather than being a mere way of letting off steam, its acceptance will not be a sign of activism or awareness of potential political power. It will be a sign of frustration and perhaps demoralization. In past periods of stagnation, since the times of Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey, nationalistic ideologies and self-help economic programs took a strong hold on the Negro masses.

Unlike those periods of retreat,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

however, the mood today among Negroes is still assertive. And although there are growing doubts about progress, the belief has still not taken hold that all exits from the ghetto are permanently blocked.

One reason is that the situation is not uniform. In Chicago, where Martin Luther King is trying to organize a movement for integration and economic equality, the Negro community still has some hope for change and the attraction of nationalist ideologies is limited. In Detroit, where jobs have opened up in the auto industry and unemployment is at a low ebb, nationalism has declined since the last election when some Negro groups were advocating an all-Negro slate for the Detroit city council. This indicates the need for more constructive economic action from Washington and fewer sermons from on high.

III

If "black power" makes inroads against "freedom and jobs now" in the Negro community, the decline in strength of the civil rights movement will be an important reason. There is a growing frustration in the movement which is somewhat different in character from the discontent felt by unorganized Negroes. Today, as distinct from the Eisenhower era and other periods of stagnation, there are real possibilities for social change But the failure of the traditional liberal organizations to move effectively for programs that deal with the problems of the ghetto has placed an enormous burden on the civil rights movement. It has been forced to confront not only discrimination, but all the basic inequalities in American society. It has been called upon by necessity both to create a new climate of liberalism and prod other social forces into constructive action.

The civil rights movement, more than President Kennedy, got "America moving again"; but problems within the movement itself have prevented it from taking full advantage of the possibilities it opened up. Its failure to develop and fight for an economic program and to move from protest to politics fast enough, enabled Johnson to outmaneuver it. When he appropriated the moral rhetoric of the Negro revolution in his "We shall overcome" speech, the movement had still not developed a meaningful economic program to challenge the LBJ moderate consensus. As a result, the Johnson Administration won over the moderates and disoriented the militants. After the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Bills were passed and the poverty program was initiated, many civil rights supporters concluded that the racial problem was on its way to a happy solution. Many white liberals felt they could now sit back, and so did a considerable section of the Negro middle class, which had most profited in recent years. Civil rights groups thereby lost contributions and membership.

Furthermore, the minimum basis for Negro unity, once provided by campaigns for the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Bills, no longer existed. In the absence of a new basis for unity, which by now only an economic program might have provided, conflicts among the civil rights groups increased. Two major consequences followed: white supporters, unwilling to turn out when the civil rights leadership was not united, drifted off;

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

President Johnson, aware of the weakened state of the movement, could more easily resist its pressures. And the cumulative effect was organizational crisis of major proportions.

Moderate groups like the NAACP grabbed on to the President's coattails, to ride out this difficult period, and lost some of their effectiveness. Leaders like Martin Luther King, A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin tried to maintain the unity of the movement around an economic program and a strategy for implementing it through "coalition politics." But they were unsuccessful, as the NAACP on one side and SNCC and CORE on the other went their separate ways. The NAACP was absorbed still further into the Johnson consensus. SNCC and CORE moved away from the idea of liberal coalition and into a proud isolation.

Discontent mounted in the ghetto, but CORE did not have the resources or manpower to organize slum dwellers. The Voting Rights Bill opened new possibilities in the South, but SNCC's income fell off drastically and its programs had to be curtailed. The overwhelming victory of Lurleen Wallace in Alabama was a sharp blow to those in the movement seeking to work out alliances with Southern white moderates and labor. And in turn this setback strengthened those who advocated going it alone.

Gains won on the national level with the passage of civil rights legislation were slow to filter down to the black belt counties of the South. One of the reasons was that the Administration moved very slowly, and most times only after pressure, to implement the new laws. SNCC and CORE workers in the South were embittered by the fact that racial violence was still an everyday occurrence—despite all the marches, protests and legislation. The frustration experienced by activists was turned inward and became a source of bitter internal disputes. It also led to an increase in black nationalist sentiment. Integrationists, both white and Negro, left the two organizations.

IV

At the same time that the movement was going through this severe crisis, new situations were developing that demanded their attention. Most important was the national concern about curing poverty.

Although the poverty program was an indirect result of pressure from the civil rights movement, it had not been designed to its specifications and needs. It was one-third stopgap and two-thirds talk. Without a national program of its own, the Negro movement reacted to the Administration's economic measures by recognizing their inadequacies in narrow rather than in broad terms. For example, most protests have centered around the question of "maximum participation" of the poor in OEO programs. But at the same time, on a grass roots level, the movement remained largely indifferent to the attempts to generate action against Administration compromises with conservatives which watered down minimum wage and unemployment compensation bills, as well as other social welfare legislation. Such measures had at least as great a potential for attacking poverty as all the OEO programs combined. In part, this reflects the nature of the poverty program which "Balkanizes" the Ne-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gro community by requiring local groups to compete for inadequate funds.

The poverty program has also absorbed many skilled civil rights activists. Some were tempted by good salaries; most by the possibility of working on socio-economic problems voluntary organizations lack the resources to handle. Many of these activists were lost to the movement, not because they were "bought off," but because the movement had developed no strategy for dealing with the poverty program And without a strategy the estimated (according to the Citizen's Crusade on Poverty) 7,000 local voluntary—that is, unfunded—antipoverty groups, which have mushroomed in poor communities, are without coordination and lack a political and economic perspective.

Thus, civil rights groups were growing organizationally weaker at a time when there came about new problems and increasing activity in the Northern ghettos around the issue of poverty and in the South around voter registration and political action. This paradox is another reason for frustration in the movement.

The NAACP with its substantial base in the Negro middle class, can ride out this difficult period. SCLC, with its support from the Negro Church and Dr. King's popularity in the liberal community, can sustain itself. But SNCC and CORE, lacking these resources and without any social base, are having a difficult time. The activists left in SNCC and CORE face not only the general crisis in the movement over program and strategy, but their own very organizational problems.

It is in the context of these developments that the cry of "black power" raised by the leaders of SNCC and CORE needs to be understood. The solution they see to their dilemma is to tap the vein of anger that runs through the Negro community. They reflect a mood more than respond creatively. The slogan of "black power"—for it is more a slogan than a strategy—is vague enough to appeal to nationalists, unemployed youth, disillusioned integrationists, Negro businessmen and (it must especially be noted) old-line machine politicians. Stokely Carmichael, who has said that for a Negro to join the Democratic party is tantamount to a Jew joining the Nazi party, joins hands in declaiming for "black power" together with Adam Powell, who is as deep in this same Democratic party as anyone can be. By joining with the nationalists, themselves a tiny minority in the Negro community, the SNCC and CORE remnants hope to stir the ghetto into action and force the white community to make concessions—though *how* they mean to do this is not yet clear. Perhaps they will explain. But right now it looks like a tactic born of frustration rather than out of a belief that real social change is possible.

Meanwhile, it is clear that the slogan of "black power" is aimed at the liberal coalition as well as at white racists; and it signifies a rejection of alliances with liberals. It sounds militant, but it marks a retreat into the ghettos of the North and enclaves in the South—a continuation of protest without politics. Those who will profit most from this slogan will be the cynical Negro machine politicians, not the idealistic militants who want to uplift the Negro masses.

The response of white liberals to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"black power" must not be to preach against "racism in reverse" and withdraw support, as so many have already done, from the civil rights struggle. To do this is to solidify the racial divisions that provoked the cry of "black power" in the first place The response of those who believe in integration and equality must be to act militantly and intelligently to challenge President Johnson's moderate consensus with a program for economic and social equality—a program on the order of A. Philip Randolph's $100 Billion Freedom Budget.* The Freedom Budget offers a solution to the organizational and social problems that have generated the slogan "black power." It provides a national plan with specific economic targets, a timetable for ending poverty and *de facto* segregation, and an alternative to the Administration's present gradualist approach. It offers a rallying point for Negro and white supporters of integration and economic progress.

It is the basis for revitalizing and unifying the civil rights movement, by giving it a national perspective and program to coordinate activities of grass-roots action and antipoverty groups—and a constructive political outlet for the anger and frustration in the Negro community. Those of us who believe "black power" leads to a dead end and that a basic change can only come through an alliance of Negroes, trade unionists, liberals, and democratic radicals, must now prove our point in the political arena. It will not, in the present circumstances, be easy.

*Full details will be presented by the A. Philip Randolph Institute this fall.

In Future Issues:

VIETNAM, THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
—Joseph Buttinger

VIETNAM, A POLITICAL BALANCE SHEET
—Irving Howe

ON PURE TOLERANCE: A DISCUSSION
—Herbert Marcuse, Robert Paul Wolff, David Spitz

AUTOMATION: A DISCUSSION
—Daniel Bell, Ben B. Seligman

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Peter Schmid

THE PERPLEXITIES OF ITALIAN COMMUNISM*

On the first anniversary of Togliatti's death, the Communist magazine *Rinascità* published a letter from his successor, Luigi Longo. Several months before he was mortally stricken in a Soviet sanitarium Togliatti informed his then deputy of the rapid worsening of his health and made him the new party leader. The purpose of this revelation was hagiographic: the average party member was to learn that its late chief had been so devoted to the movement that its welfare worried him even in his last hours on this earth. But, unexpectedly, Longi's letter boomeranged.

"What contempt for the most elementary principles of democracy!" exclaimed the enemy press. The Communists had the nerve to change leaders without whispering a word to their followers! And yet, a touch of envy lay concealed in this indignation. What admirable discipline, they thought, must prevail in the party if such an important decision can be kept secret for a month in a country so given to gossip. Even if only the highest officials were in on the secret, there were about a hundred of them, and none of them gave it away. A mass party with both a membership of 1.8 million and the discipline of an esoteric secret society represents a truly frightening power.

For all their political foxiness, the Italian Communists were honestly puzzled by the sneering admiration of their enemies. They did not expect such an interpretation because the secret change of leadership had actually not taken place. A high party official explained to me that a few weeks after Togliatti wrote the letter he felt well enough to resume his leadership. He held it until his death in August 1964. But despite of all this—or, rather, because of it—the Italian C.P. realized that the publication of Longi's letter had been a tactical mistake. They looked for scapegoats; but, incredible as it may sound, they couldn't find any. For among Communists, too, iron discipline co-exists with good old Italian sloppiness. It is because they partake of all the Italian

*This article has been translated, with permission, from the French magazine *Preuves*. A few minor cuts have been made for reasons of space.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

virtues and vices that their party is the most charming—and most dangerous—Communist organization in Europe.

The people of Italy feel the same way, as proved by the steady postwar increase in the Communist vote. Today 26% of all Italians vote Communist, while the chief anti-Communist party, the Christian Democrats, has managed to hold on to 38%. This increase in Communist votes is all the more remarkable as the party membership has been steadily shrinking. The same trend can be noted in other Western European countries. In the affluent society ideological questions become less important, especially for the younger generation.

I travelled by car in the footsteps of Carlo Levi through the mountains of Lucania, whose misery he has so movingly described in *Christ Stopped at Eboli*. Nowhere did I find a poverty as alarming as in India or rural Mexico. Of course, the discrepancy between the prosperous North and the backward South remains enormous. The feudal misgovernment which has ruthlessly exploited the *Mezzogiorno* for centuries is not alone responsible; there is the poor soil, and perhaps also the more irrational temper of the people. Today the Italian government tries to bridge the abyss between industrial North and agricultural South by intensive social and economic measures: the South consumes an average of at least 40% of all ministerial budgets.

II

More rapidly effective than these long-range plans is the pull of the industrial North and of foreign countries: Southern surplus labor emigrates to Milan and Turin, to Switzerland and the Ruhr. From there it sends back part of its wages to support families at home. The life of a foreign worker is not enviable and most are only too willing to return to Italy as soon as they can. Still, the emigration of the young industrial proletariat from the South has acted as a kind of political safety valve. Discontent, nostalgia, and anger against an economic system that forces youth to migrate may push the *Mezzogiorno* towards a revolution; but hunger has practically vanished as a subversive force.

It is a historical fact that revolutions almost never arise from the depths of misery. Rather, the spark of impatience bursts into flame only when a nascent economic development offers new hopes. The fatalistic and superstitious mountain peasant of Carlo Levi's books has no idea of rebelling against the landlord or official who torments him. He lacks the physical strength and the intellectual concept of a different system. To this day the Communist citadels are to be found in the prosperous North and not in the South. Again, it is significant that their systematic organization work in the South has so far been crowned with little suc-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cess. A conservative Church, allied with landlords by the grace of God, still keeps the unruly spirits under its spell. It is the emigrants, the young, the competent, the thoughtful workers who, despite the good wages they earn abroad, succumb to the lure of the Communist party. When they return home, they will form dangerous cadres.

While I was visiting Apulia, Communist organizers were active in the Tarento-Brindisi-Lecce triangle. They were trying to incite the *mezzadri,* the sharecroppers, against their landlords. I spent a few days in Manduria, a clean and pretty country town, whose narrow, crooked streets run between whitewashed houses. All day long the *piazza,* picturesquely framed by churches and palaces, lay empty under the brilliant sun. Most of the inhabitants had driven their brightly painted carts in the morning to the vineyards, which stretch for many kilometers along the plain and the gentle hills. But in the evening, when the lengthening shadows brought coolness, the *piazza* was filled with men, peasants with serious, furrowed faces and toil-worn hands. They stood and talked in small groups and formed a curiously loose mass. A man was distributing leaflets for the Communist Chamber of Labor. These dealt, of course, with the problem that concerned them all: a new distribution of the grape harvest.

In the union office the action was already being prepared: the tenants were queuing up to sign printed notices to terminate their contracts. Cosimo, the union secretary, explained to me that all these peasants had for decades been working a piece of land under contract to the landowner. Usually the land had been a stony waste. The tenants fertilized it and planted it with vines, all at their own expense. Was it right that a man who had turned a piece of barren land into a vineyard by dozens of years of hard work should still have to give, year after year, almost half of its yield—45%—to a landlord who doesn't invest a penny? To remedy this injustice the parliament in Rome had passed a law; but it was so unclear that no peasant could hope to use it to secure his rights against his landlord's lawyer. The Communist secretary Cosimo stepped in here with this advice: "If the landlord does not give you your share, take it. Three fifths of the harvest if the land was already tilled; four-fifths if you planted is yourself. Even if the landlords defended themselves with the aid of their lawyers, it was of little use while this revolutionary mood stirred Manduria. The man who harvested the grapes sat at the long handle of the wine press. He delivered the press, reserved one- or two-fifths for his landlord as the case might be, and waited for him to go to court.

You have to get up early if you want to see the sharecroppers of Manduria drive out to their work. At six in the morning Cosimo took

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me into the fields on his Lambretta. Against all expectation I got along with him quite well. He was by no means a raving demagogue: a quiet man of forty, with curly hair and a good baritone voice. His incipient corpulence was not due to a *dolce vita*; he lived more modestly than his protégés. I found a TV set and a refrigerator in the home of many a man who looked poverty-stricken. Cosimo could hardly afford such luxuries on his monthly salary of less than 75 dollars. For him, union work was a struggle for the poor, for social justice; he told me this without any false pathos and I could not but take his idealism seriously. But he also proved himself a realist. During our trip we came across a violently gesticulating group of men, with the tenant and the landlord's agent the protagonists. The agent was a pleasant, modest man, a professional craftsman only loosely linked to capitalist interests. He wanted to strike a peaceful bargain with his adversary: sixty to forty. The tenant shouted, and insisted on 80 percent. Cosimo listened for a while; then he intervened, sharply and definitely: "You know quite well that your land was tilled and that you can claim only sixty." And he added: "The union does not support unreasonable demands." I did not trust my ears: the red union secretary acting as ally of the landowners.

III

I gained a totally different impression from a visit to a new steel mill of the *Italsider,* one of the proudest development projects of the *Mezzogiorno,* located in the port city of Tarento. It occupies twice the area of the old city and is highly automated. This automation has proved to be, at least temporarily, a gift of the Danaids for Tarento. 18,000 workers had streamed there from all over Italy to build the mill. When it was finished they stayed in Tarento; but the mill needs only 4,500 workers. The city is now plagued by more unemployed than ever before.

The Communist unionists whom I visited in Tarento were obviously on edge. Their attacks against the "capitalist exploiters" of *Italsider* were ridiculously exaggerated. Thus they told me, with a great show of indignation, of a young worker .who had recently dropped dead in his home without any visible illness—obviously from over-exertion under inhuman working conditions. The real reason behind their rage was perhaps that the Communist union federation, the FIOM, had just suffered a crushing defeat by their Catholic competitors, in the elections to the Labor Commission, although only a few months earlier it had won the elections and named a Communist chairman of the Commission. New elections had to be called because

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the said chairman, Pietro Aducci, had offered his resignation in a sensational letter to his colleagues. He explained that political interference by the Communists had made it impossible for him, as a unionist, to defend the interests of his fellow workers. His deputy, another Communist, also resigned, and the Catholic minority on the Commission followed suit. Even if the accusations of my informants were correct and the resignation of the chairman was really a camouflaged and well-timed move by the management, still, the sudden switch in the workers' vote indicates a disillusionment that must stem from deeper causes. For, in the last few years, the Communists have suffered similar, considerable defeats in the big factories of the Italian North, as in the Turin Fiat works. Marx seems proved wrong here: the banner-bearers of the revolution are not the advanced workers of industrialized countries but the backward peasant masses. The last two great Communist revolutions happened in China and Cuba, while Communist influence in the industrial areas of Turin and Milan declines or remains stationary.

Now it so happens that the Italian Communists include a downright affluent social group, which in no way expects the party to lift them out of a state of misery. It is a well-organized clique of special interests, bolstered by a position of considerable social and economic power. The "established" Communists of the Romagna-Emilia have hardly anything in common with their "Chinese" comrades of Apulia. The red co-operatives of this region originally had little to do with Communism. They grew up in a republican and socialist spirit. The whole area between Rimini and Modena, the Romagna-Emilia, became the reddest provinces of Italy's famous "Red Belt" primarily because of the German occupation in World War II. It was here that the toughest and bloodiest partisan war was waged against the Nazis—and it was led by the Communists. To be sure, they interpreted the word "enemy" rather broadly and liquidated, together with the Germans, many Italians who might later endanger their power. By the time Scelba, the Catholic Minister of the Interior, broke this red terror, it had already largely achieved its aim: the establishment of a Communist enclave in the midst of a democratic Italy.

The Communism of this enclave has little to do with ideology. Its cadres form an elite that loves power for power's sake and its fellow-travelers either inherited their sympathies from their fathers or acquired them for opportunistic reasons. The bloody beginnings of this Communist power are long forgotten today. Communist functionaries in high office are excellent administrators in a thoroughly conservative manner, e.g. Dozza, the popular mayor of Bologna.

In the province of Ravenna 80,000 members are organized in 225

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

red co-operatives, mostly agricultural ones. They are almost all former *braccianti* (day laborers) who acquired their land in a more or less legal way. No German Junker could show me so proudly his clean cowsheds with the herd of 500 handsome cattle, or the harvesting machines in his fields as the chairman of the peasant co-operative of Mezzano, which has 1,500 members. They farm 2,500 hectars (some 6,000 acres) of their own and of leased land, and grow cereals, sugar beets, fruit and vegetables. This co-operative is both more capitalist and more socialist than a Soviet *kolkhoz*. Unlike their Russian colleagues, the members own no gardens around their country cottages. They prefer to live in the city and bicycle to their fields every morning, like workers going to a factory. They are peasants, but with the mentality of workers: the land is only a means of production to them. They earn the legal rate for all farm labor with a bonus of 60 lire (10 cents) per hour and work a seven-hour day. Their chairman spoke well of them: they would rather reinvest their profits than spend them. Mechanization enables them to save the expense of outside labor and to increase production. Methods which are sinful when employed by capitalists become virtuous when practiced by the red co-operatives.

I found a similar mentality in a giant building co-operative which occupies a vast area near the harbor of Ravenna. It pushes efficiency so far as to service all its building sites from a central cement mixer. And I came across the *panettone* (cookies) of the baking co-operative Cofor in the remote villages of Apulia. Cofor's chairman is, indeed, a curious kind of baker. He is a doctor of law who proudly showed me the rising production curve of his enterprise on a wall diagram.

IV

It may seem strange at first that the red co-operatives do not try to put their social creed into practice by lowering their prices for the benefit of the consumer—as is done, for example, by the Swiss "social capitalist" Gottlieb Duttweiler in his Migros chain stores. True, the chairman of the building co-operative spoke to me vaguely of "breaking the monopoly of capitalist outfits"; but actually he lived with them in the kind of tacit agreement that so often prevails among competitors and is founded on a desire to make as much profit as possible without a struggle.

There is a solid political reason behind this Communist "will to profit." The earnings of Romagna-Emilia co-operatives are an important source of revenue for the party treasury in Rome. It is a point on which both party and co-operatives prefer to remain silent, so that one can only make estimates. The annual expenditure of the *Botteghe Os-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cure (the ominously named Street of the Dark Stores on which the party headquarters are located) has been calculated at 12 to 13 billion lire (about 20 million dollars). It rises by some further 5 billion in election years. Only about a quarter of this amount is supplied by membership dues and subscriptions to the party press; the rest must come from other sources. One of the most important of these are the red co-operatives. Their gross annual turnover is estimated at 100 billion lire (about 63 million dollars) and their net profits at 10 billion. Two-thirds of these, it is said, go to the party treasury.

A second important source of income is from the camouflaged Communist corporations which trade with the countries of the Eastern bloc. The largest of them, bearing the harmless name of International Import and Export Corporation, has its seat in Milan. The government trading corporations from Warsaw to Peking do their Italian business mostly through red firms, whose profits indirectly subsidize the Italian C.P.—not to mention the money which Italian private or semi-government corporations, anxious to outbid their competitors for East bloc business, silently permit to flow in the same direction.

V

One reason the Italian C.P. may have been able to pursue a policy independent of Moscow at such an early date is that it possesses a strong financial basis of its own, which makes direct Soviet subsidies, if not superfluous, at least not vital. To be sure, the Italian Communists could not act as strongly as Tito, whom Togliatti condemned as a heretic in unison with the other Communist leaders at the time of his break with Moscow. But the Italian Communists acted all the more decisively after Stalin's death, when Togliatti coined the concept of "polycentrism," after which Moscow no longer was the Mecca of world Communism. Its logical consequence was "the Italian road to Socialism," and with it a justification of all the national, not to say nationalist, Communist groups which now try to find their "own road to Socialism."

Toleration is celebrated as the first of virtues in discussions with the Italian Communists these days. In a book exhibit at the C.P. offices of the little Apulian town of Alberobello I found, in addition to many publications on the art of love, not only books by anti-Communist writers like Koestler and Camus but also, in a position of honor, the latest work of Silone, *Emergency Exit,* an emphatic rejection of Communism. "Dogmatism is death," the local party chief, a young doctor, explained in answer to my questioning look. "We can find the true way only through discussion and therefore we are not afraid of it." During my visit to the red co-operatives I was trying to be diplomatic and leave

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

delicate questions for a later occasion; but the functionary who accompanied me talked right away about awkward matters. "The problem of socialist co-operatives," he stated, "is the same here as elsewhere: People do not work hard enough because of a lack of incentives." And so we were right in the middle of a discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of collective organizations. There are no longer any official theses to parrot; nor is there that uneasy constraint with which the Stalinists—and some of their successors—slide over uncomfortable realities.

Today the Italian Communists freely concede that, after World War II, the Russians were the worst enemies of Communism, because they forced their neo-byzantinism upon the parties of Eastern Europe and of the West. There is in this a touch of Latin cultural snobbery—they feel as immeasurably superior to the "barbarians" of the East as the French bourgeois feel to the "barbarians" of America. Togliatti was a brilliant mind, and his party has attracted the celebrities of art and literature even more strongly than its French sister party. For a long time, the Communist party was the only one in Italy to take cultural problems seriously, so that the intellectuals willingly fell under its spell —men like the writers Elio Vittorini and Carlo Levi (who let himself be elected Senator by Communist votes as an independent candidate); the publishers Feltrinelli and Einaudi; the painter Guttuso (whose fascist past does not prevent him from sitting on the party's Central Committee); the sculptor Manzù (whom John XXIII commissioned to do the "Door of Death" of Saint Peter's, explaining that Communists were also children of God); the film directors Antonioni, Pasolini, and Rosi; the archeologist Bianchi Bandinelli, etc. Not all of these are party members; but they all shine in the aura of spiritual glory which transfigures the party.

This new fashion of liberalism fits the Italian Communists so well that one almost forgets to ask them how they managed to wear the Stalinist strait-jacket all through the bad years. That Togliatti's resignation was kept secret for months may seem trivial beside the fact that he had hewed to the Soviet line for years, while harboring quite different thoughts. Even quite "liberal" Italian Communists still excuse this treason by explaining that, in those days, the "socialist world" was threatened by the American atomic monopoly and could be saved only by absolute solidarity. Even at the price of sacrificing one's intellect.

But if the end so cynically justifies the means, if Togliatti could repress his liberal criticism for years and mouth the most absurd Stalinist lies, then who can guarantee that the present liberalism was not just

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as cynically invented as a party line to catch gullible democrats and pave the way for a Communist seizure of power?

Today the Communists look for allies in two different directions. To break out of the vicious circle of isolation and fruitless opposition to which the government of the "opening to the Left" has confined them, they stretch out their hands simultaneously to the Socialists and the left-wing Catholics. Their courting of the Socialists seems, at first sight, more reasonable, since Nenni's breaking of his long alliance with the Communists and his participation in the government seem to have had disappointing results. The ideological range of the government parties is so great that their opposing tendencies cancel each other out and condemn the cabinet to immobilism. Moreover, this has happened at the very moment of a lull in the "economic miracle," when a strong hand at the helm is especially needed. The steady rise of prices and of the cost of living may well be beyond the government's control; but the voters still blame those in office, including the Socialists. While Nenni's party is considering a merger with the Saragat Socialists, it faces a secession of a Left wing. And, indeed, Socialist-Communist co-operation has continued in many provincial and municipal governments, despite Nenni's alliance with the Christian Democrats.

VI

What would be the element of unity if the thesis of Pietro Ingrao, the Communist parliamentary leader, and Mario Alicata, editor-in-chief of Unità, triumphs and the left-wing Catholics are chosen as partners in a new alliance? There already exists a Catholic group, led by the former mayor of Florence, La Pira, which asks for a "dialogue with the Communists."

The Italian Communists, unlike the secularist Italian Socialists and Republicans and unlike their own prophet Lenin, have never attacked or despised religion as "opium for the people." The forms of Catholicism—perhaps more than its true religious content—are so intimately connected with Italian life that no mass party would dare to defy them. On the contrary, the C.P. has put to its own advantage many instinctive loyalties tied to these religious forms. Just as the faithful have for many centuries kissed the statue of Saint Peter to partake of its charisma, so did hundreds of thousands kiss the coffin in which the dead Togliatti was lying in state. Some crossed themselves, others raised their fist. Outside, the party sections were marching under flags almost indistinguishable in shape and imagery from the flags carried by religious processions.

Instead of fighting Catholicism the Communists have always tried

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to achieve a symbiosis with it. For Catholicism, not so much in its content as in its temper, is a creed of salvation and, as such, is closer to the Leninist eschatology than is Social Democracy, which is rationalist and this-worldly. Practicing and faithful Catholics are to be found even among leading Communists. I was told of the case of a Communist mayor, whom his comrades accused of injuring the party because he did not have his new-born son baptized. When the Communists in the Italian Parliament voted after the war to renew the Lateran Pacts and thus make unconstitutional a progressive institution like divorce, they did not do it from religious conviction but for purely tactical reasons —because the Italian woman regularly goes to mass and is grateful to the Church for tying her flighty mate to her for life. The courting of the left-wing Catholics by the Communists is also, surely, a tactical maneuver. What is at stake is not so much the 85 progressive Christian Democratic deputies; rather, the Communists would like to win over the Catholic worker and peasant masses which have hitherto denied their votes to the atheist Communists for religious reasons. When John XXIII modified the militant condemnation of Communism by his predecessor, it was enough to ensure a striking increase of the Communist vote in the next elections. Pope John became, of course, a great favorite with the Communists.

But the Communists have the bad luck that their potential allies take their ideology much more seriously than they do themselves. A good Marxist takes no risk when he joins with a Catholic; after all, he believes that the religious superstructure will one day vanish from this earth. But for the left-wing Catholic, his faith is the foundation which alone gives life order and meaning. A leader of the ACLI, the Catholic union federation, put it to me this way: "Yes, we are ready for a dialogue with the Communists. But only on concrete questions, on which common targets are advisable. There can be no dialogue on matters of principle; if we let the Communists lure us into it, they will simply use us for propaganda purposes." A young priest led a discussion in the workers' club of Aprilia, a small town in Latium, which I attended. The subject was anything but esoteric: the rights of the worker at his place of work. The young men of the ACLI fight Communism with its own methods; they form militant groups in the factories, offer legal aid, conduct social activities and organize adult education classes. "The social reforms demanded by the Communists are justified and necessary," they told me, "and this gives them strength. If we fight them, as the *dorotei* (right-wing Christian Democrats) do, in purely defensive actions founded on our faith, then we will surely lose.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We must ourselves achieve the reforms which the Communists advocate because this propaganda drives the masses into their party."

When the cat proclaims its conversion to vegetarianism it will be long before the mice believe it. Even if the Communists' offer of friendship is sincerely meant, only small splinter groups of the parties which they court are so far ready to accept it. Those who in the past have made such masterly use of tactics of deception cannot be so easily trusted. Even if they have thrown their old ideology overboard, their failure to produce a new one is all the more alarming. This is the view of Ignazio Silone, who told me:

"When you question Communists on the simplest of definitions, you face them with a dilemma. For example, the definition of the state. Lenin defined it as a hostile power which had to be destroyed and replaced by something completely new, the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Communists have in practice rejected this definition, without daring to accept its opposite, formulated by Kautsky, who defined the state as a democratic order with many levels and with several separate powers, each of which can be administered independently in collaboration with other parties. It remains to be seen how long a mass party like the Italian C.P. can muddle along without having any clear idea of basic political concepts.

"Since there has been no genuine ideological revision, I do not believe in the democratization of Communism. Its alleged liberalization is, in the first place, a matter of tactics or perhaps not even of that, but only a try-out tactics. But we must not, of course, rule out the possibility that this maneuver will get out of control and in time will become a psychological reality, a true democratization."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE POVERTY OF ANTIPOVERTY

With this issue, DISSENT *begins a series of first-hand reports on specific projects of the Poverty Program. As Michael Harrington and others have noted in these pages, the War on Poverty is woefully inadequate both in scope and concept. Yet wherever poverty funds go, a political fight begins, a fight in which city hall patronage is militantly attacked by new combinations of radicals, many of whom had never before been motivated to political action. Since these groups are usually organized around local issues, political and social attitudes are debated under conditions of intense practical pressure. Inevitably, new activists are declaring themselves and attempting to bring radical perspectives to bear on situations which will present more and more opportunities for political activity. In future issues we hope to print reports from others directly involved in the struggle to escalate the War on Poverty into a full-scale assault on the appalling inequities in jobs, housing, and education*—ED.

Andrew Kopkind

A Ministry of Hope

Little by little, everything that troubles America has become the concern of the Office of Economic Opportunity. Two years ago the OEO was simply a federal command post for the War on Poverty, hardly a modest operation at that. It is running at a cost of $1.75 billion a year, but it is now much more—something close to a Department for Fulfilling the American Dream: the Ministry of Hope. "Poverty" has turned out to be not a single phenomenon, like housing or water pollution, but a reflection of all the ills of the society. So it is now a war on class hostility, racial segregation, and powerlessness of the poor: on middle-class alienation, bureaucratic proliferation, the insufficient economy, inadequate education, political elitism—in short, the condition of man in the modern world.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is not likely that anyone can draw a coherent picture of what the War on Poverty is doing; it is too big and far too diffuse for comprehension. Shelves of books are produced on antipoverty, panels discuss it, committees meet on it. It will figure in every election campaign from now on—probably for the rest of our lives. Still, it is almost impossible to speak of the poverty war in terms of success or failure. There are few useful tests. The end of poverty will not be announced like V-J Day, with fire-crackers and funny hats. Ending poverty means closing the still-widening gap between the "haves" and "have-nots," fragmenting the ghettoes, employing the unemployed, fully-employing the underemployed, opening politics to all people and classes, eliminating the wide disparities in education. If the War on Poverty brings any of that about, it will take years to be recognized.

Despite the enormity of the obstacles, attacks are mounted with energy and optimism. Republicans may grumble; some of them have called the OEO a "fuddle factory." The Left criticizes the whole effort, from theory to appropriation, as inadequate. Both sides are right in a way, but the campaign continues and things (perhaps not precisely what is predicted) begin to happen. At this early stage, they can be seen only on small screens. Under a Head Start project in Mississippi, thousands of Negro children go to pre-schools run by their parents and neighbors, out of the debilitating reach of the traditional white school boards. VISTA workers organize slum-dwellers in East Harlem in block groups that can challenge the slumlords, the bureaucrats, and even the social workers who seem to keep the poor in their place. Youths are sent off to Job Corps camps where they may be able to learn skills that could lift them permanently from the unemployable underclass.

The most visible, ultimately the most expensive, and the most unpredictable part of the war is community action. In theory it is something between controlled, social revolution and subsidized self-help, and in practice it swings to one side or the other in response to the prevailing political winds. Essentially, it is the notion that the government should spend $500 million a year to encourage rapid social change. It can be done in the most militant of ways: organizing the poor to threaten the "power structure" and gain material benefits. Or in more gradual ways: tutoring under-achieving school children, helping the elderly to find useful things to do, teaching the poor how to be careful shoppers.

The essential thread running through it all is the concept of *participation,* and despite the increasing political attacks, it is likely to be part of national policy in our times. The task force which set up the Poverty Program believed that as far as politics and imagination would allow,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it must not be another New Deal of welfare handouts. We were all Marxians then, and now we are all Freudians: the poor must be "motivated" to change their conditions themselves. Government cannot do the job for the poor, but it can provide the materiel. High-minded social workers and higher-minded volunteers act as the catalysts, and the emphasis is all on the young—on training and educating rather than doling and protecting. Of the 35 million considered "poor" in the U.S., 15 million are under 18.

To define the problem of poverty and to describe the antipoverty war is not to conclude that the desired effects will automatically follow. Only recently have most Americans found out what is going on in their home towns. Even the poverty warriors themselves have a woefully inadequate analysis of the problems, and the fuzziest notions of their solution. There are unresolved questions about all the programs. Is Head Start simply plugging children into class-education one or two years earlier than regular school? Does the Job Corps train its charges for work that will be automated out of existence in a few years? Are Neighborhood Youth Corps workers merely telling the poor to act middle-class so that they can get better jobs? Is Upward Bound educating the poor for roles that they can never fill because the "system" won't let them in? Does VISTA have any strategy for bringing change or does it merely supply extra staff for understaffed service agencies? Most important, can community action agencies really fight the politics which seem increasingly to circumscribe their activities? Politics is all. The money the OEO spends and the power it can confer on previously invisible elements of society makes it the most politically sensitive legislation in this generation.

The answer to all the questions is both yes and no. Certainly the distance between rhetoric and reality in the poverty war is greater than anywhere else (with the possible, and depressing, exception of foreign policy). To change the condition of poverty will require a major reconstruction of institutions, and that is a task few governments take on themselves.

Something less dramatic will emerge from this War on Poverty. Even if the "other war" in Vietnam does not blow the whole scheme (and us with it) to bits, and antipoverty efforts are expanded, the winds of change are not likely to amount to a revolutionary hurricane in this affluent society. But even a cursory glance at the country will show that things have come a long way in five years. It is almost as if the War on Poverty were part of a programmatic series of events which is moving

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

America in the 1960's. Antipoverty, the Negro revolution, the student movement, the activism of the clergy, the peace protest, the organization of independent political groups—it is all a slow but deep social earthquake, and before the faulting stops, there will be more changes than anyone now can predict.

Herbert Kohl

How to Succeed in Antipoverty Without Really Trying

How do you get into the antipoverty business? In Brooklyn the Bedford–Stuyvesant YMCA, proposing TRY (Training Resources for Youth), may have come up with an ingenious solution. It merely takes a powerful board of directors and an initial investment of $50,000.

The first step is simple—hire a "professional" staff of social scientists, legislative specialists, and systems experts. They are easy to find, at the universities, or working for the military. Then review federal legislation to see what the government is offering and design a program accordingly. Survey the most current social-science and educational journals and develop a justification for the program "in the light of the most recent research in the field." Give this material to a systems expert and let him cast it into "modern"form (complete with flow diagrams, input, output, and feedback). Then get endorsements from leading members of the community, package and publish the project proposal, set up a token pilot project—and wait for the dividends from Washington.

The intentions behind such a proposal may well be moral. Yet one can't but wonder where that $50,000 and those ingenious experts would be if not for recent federal legislation. The YMCA, after all, has not been notoriously active in fighting poverty during its last 25 years in Bedford–Stuyvesant. In fact there has been discussion of closing the Y if the project is not funded.

The TRY proposal is an impressive document. It sets out plans for a semi-residential vocational training program for 500 to 1,000 jobless

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

youths from the age of 17 to 20 who live in the Bedford–Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. The entire program is neatly summarized by several flow diagrams that follow these boys (the input) from entry into the program through educational, psychological, and vocational training (the phase states of the system) into jobs (the output) and through to follow-up services (the feedback). An elaborate research design incorporates continual scientific evaluation and reevaluation. The planners envision a computer bank programmed with the characteristics of both the staff and the boys that will constantly be used to develop research projects and to indicate the effectiveness of the ongoing program. This research aspect of the program is perhaps the most novel aspect of the design and possibly the one that most excites the social scientists who have conceived TRY. Its actual usefulness in helping the boys has yet to be established.

It is also encouraging that TRY acknowledges the magnitude of the problem of unemployed youth in Bedford–Stuyvesant and hopes to help up to a thousand boys. Unfortunately TRY's portrait of 17–20-year-old jobless youths is more a caricature than a serious attempt to describe human beings.

According to TRY's proposal, most deprived youths are neither introspective nor verbal. They do not know the origins of many of their attitudes and opinions. Hate, for example—or bitterness, hopelessness and despair? The boys are said to be "lacking [in] the ability to make connections between actions and consequences." Connections between stealing and flight, for example, or job-seeking and rejection?

"A lack of practice in introspection leads [them] . . . to superficial or incorrect explanations." Of segregation in the North, or of the strategy of prejudice and counter-prejudice? We read that the jobless youths from Bedford–Stuyvesant "must become more aware of the quality and content of their thoughts and feelings," and that the TRY project must "help them learn how to analyze their own thought processes and their feelings." And how is TRY to achieve these goals? By teaching "Life Skills" and "Life Responsibilities" that will "provide for an intensive study of community resources." In the original version of the proposal, an example of such Life Skills was presented in the unit entitled "The Policeman and Me." The plan called for the jobless black youths to talk with policemen (some may have already), visit the station house (a neighborhood landmark), and learn the difficulties of policing a ghetto. Then these youths were to meet a policeman in "real life" and, "listening to the Police Officer after having had opportunity to learn more about policing in the city should result in more appreciative attitudes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

towards the police and their work. Undoubtedly there will be some students who will still hold unfavorable opinions about police services in the city. The interplay of these students with the others in the DISCUSSION which follows the police officer's talk should REVEAL FEELINGS [capitalized in the proposal] with which counselors will work . . ." Good God!

The counselors are to work within "the areas of Life Responsibility" emphasized in this curriculum: "Developing and maintaining the self psychologically and physically; preparing for a career; managing home and family responsibilities; using leisure time productively; and participating effectively in the community." An admirable program for the educable mentally retarded perhaps, but also admirably designed to further alienate the already alienated. Black youths, "disadvantaged" youths, jobless or not, are not mentally retarded, nor do they need to be taught how to develop and maintain themselves, their loves, families, homes and jobs. What they need is simply the opportunity to live lives in which human beings can humanly maintain themselves. The ghetto is inhuman, not the people who live there.

Lest this seem too harsh on the TRY proposals, it must be added that their notion of "culturally deprived" youth is no different from that current in most antipoverty programs and is derived directly from the social science literature on the disadvantaged. The book most frequently referred to in the literature is Frank Riessman's *The Culturally Deprived Child* which characterizes deprived children as anti-intellectual, physical and visual, content-centered, externally-oriented, problem-centered, inductive, spatial, slow, careful and persevering—implying that non-deprived children are intellectual, aural, form-centered, introspective, abstract-centered, deductive, temporal, quick, clever, facile, and flexible—a portrait no less absurd than that of the deprived child.

Yet TRY's notion of Life-Skills education does have fascinating possibilities. The Life-Skills educator is conceived of as combining the roles of teacher, counselor, and therapist in a newer, more flexible way which certainly may be called for because of the acknowledged failure of traditional teaching, counseling, and therapy with "disadvantaged" youth. TRY may have a solution, but one has to be wary of the proliferation of "professional" roles. It isn't necessarily the role of the teacher, counselor, or therapist that has failed with the poor and the alienated. More likely it has been the individual teacher, counselor, and therapist —and what they have taught, counseled, and thought they were curing. The new flexibility of a Life-Skills educator may be desirable, but if he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is to tell the same old condescending lies (as in the Policeman story), he will fail in the same old way.

The TRY project offers, in addition to Life Skills, a list of carefully selected vocational programs. The Philco Corporation, the Interstate United Corporation, and tentatively the Brass Rail restaurants have been contracted to develop training programs, and a machine servicing corporation is also being sought. TRY has offered these corporations alluring incentives: profit (from federal funds), and the opportunity to develop a training program that can be resold to the U.S. for retraining projects in underdeveloped nations. It seems that the antipoverty program is being used by corporations to develop training methods which may easily become part of foreign aid and development packages. Thus the federal government supports research on its own "underdeveloped" population so that American business will be ready to meet an increasing demand for service and training units in Africa and Latin America. It is rumored that the TRY package has been approached by the Canadian government, even before it had been funded or tested in the U.S.

The vocational programs TRY has carefully selected involve non-unionized industries. TRY has chosen Auto and Diesel Service, Food Service, Vending Machine Service, Home Appliance Service, Business Machines Service, Heating and Air-Conditioning, and Refrigeration as the areas of training. The vocations, too, are dressed out in flow diagrams. Yet when one looks closely at the diagram, one finds that what is meant, say, by food service is, in order from entry to exit: Kitchen Man and Counter Service Worker to Short-Order Cook and Second Cook, to Steward, First Cook, Advanced Short-Order Cook, and finally to Chef and Assistant Manager. Vending Machine Service, when translated reads: Candy routeman, cigar routeman, gum routeman, etc.

So 500 to 1,000 jobless youths will be allowed to choose between working in restaurants or garages, or the filling of vending machines. But why such an elaborae program to teach these trades— aren't there vocational high schools in the city, and doesn't one learn such trades on the job anyway? Why not just give the dropouts the jobs in the first place?

But do they want such jobs? Isn't the fact that these were the only jobs available in the first place one of the causes for their dropping out of school and not looking for work? Can one feed these young people lies in modern, attractive forms and buy out their bitterness? These youths are experts at picking out the lie and silently quitting in despair. That is perhaps the true meaning of Riessman's term "non-introspective."

Here then is the dilemma of the YMCA proposal—can one accept

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the status quo and still do something about poverty and prejudice in America? One can seem to be doing something and yet avoid the issue through entering the antipoverty business, via neatly packaged justifications and elegant experimental designs. But if committment is to go any deeper, if social and human motives are to take precedence over narrow economic interests, then one must be committed to change and agitation, to sacrificing transient respectability, in order to win the respect of those one is trying to help. The very existence of such appalling irrational poverty and helplessness in American society is a more serious indictment of the helping than the helped. It is the YMCA that needs Life-Skills Education.

Deborah Meier

A Report from Philadelphia: Head Start or Dead End?

The photograph of Negro children looking at an attractive young teacher while she intently reads them a book has become a symbol of the War on Poverty. It conveys a commitment to the innocent and forgotten child, concern for small and unglamorous details, and a one-to-one relationship between the middle-class reformer and the victims of poverty.

The Head Start program has been termed the one unmixed blessing of the War on Poverty and LBJ's pride and joy. Since it deals with the education (and not integration) of the very young, it is subject to fewer complications than programs dealing with employment, retraining for adults, and housing.

Yet even in this deceptively simple area the basic difficulties of the Poverty Program reflect themselves in a hodgepodge of conflicting ideologies and interests. Patronage politics, Negro nationalism, middle-class reformism, bureaucratic bungling, and the highest idealism and self-sacrifice—all make themselves felt in the new nurseries.

The Philadelphia Get Set project extends the Head Start concept into a year-around program. After the success of one summer's Head

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Start, it was assumed that a year or two of pre-kindergarten enrichment would help disadvantaged children compete with their middle-class peers. For this purpose the federal government contracted with the Philadelphia Board of Education for a program involving 5,000 three- and four-year-olds for a minimum of one year. Since the program began only September, 1965, it is too early to judge its success. Some of its problems are unique to Philadelphia, but many others are certain to appear wherever the program gets under way.

While Get Set teachers are hired by the Board of Education, they are not required to satisfy normal certification or substitute requirements. As a result, the program has attracted many men and women who otherwise would not make their way into public school teaching. On the whole, these are people of *greater* general intelligence than their elementary school counterparts. A minority of course is attracted by the special hours possible, or by the relatively good pay. Probably a third of the staff is Negro and about a tenth male. But by and large these people demonstrate a greater interest in the problems of deprived children than would ordinary school teachers.

The 200 teachers were given a two-week training program which proved essentially chaotic and confusing. Within a few weeks, after having lost some of their original self-confidence, they were thrown out into the field. Their only support from then on came from the eight well-meaning but harrassed supervisors who had to divide their limited hours among eight or nine different "schools" scattered throughout the city. Thus some teachers had as many as three different supervisors during their first five months. Basically, however, the supervisors, who are the only experienced pre-school personnel in the program, are without any power and perform the functions of messengers and clerks. All problems, both weighty and petty, must be cleared by the Director, who looks upon teachers and especially supervisors as threats to her prestige and power.

Get Set classes are held in churches, recreation centers, and settlement houses. Lack of classroom space is typical in areas where, at present, many children are deprived of even kindergarten. (One of the ironies of the program is that Get Set offers pre-kindergarten services to three- and four-year-olds, whose five-year-old siblings must remain at home.) Perhaps the most shocking aspect of the program for most new teachers has been the physical state of the centers. While some are in lovely spacious churches, most are in dark, dingy rooms, with poor lighting, inadequate toilet facilities, no yards or gyms, etc. In a general effort to fill up the enrollment and spend the money provided by Con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gress, supervisors were instructed to put as many teachers into the centers and as many children into the rooms as possible. Where rooms were ample and airy they were divided in half with makeshift partitions. Some rooms are as small as 200 square feet, and sometimes two classrooms operate side-by-side in one room of 500 square feet, with only chairs or tables separating the two groups.

Despite the presence of elected Community Action Councils, the Get Set program is run in accordance with normal school procedures—from the top down—and is aimed towards eventually integrating the program into the school system rather than the community. The teachers were somewhat dismayed at first to learn that most of the mothers had heard that Get Set would be opening day care centers, thereby enabling the mothers to get jobs. They were disappointed that the hours we could provide were at maximum 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M., and that for most children we could offer only morning or afternoon programs for only four days a week. Few were aware that a family-means test excluded children whose parents earned over $6,000. Naturally the criteria encourage cheating by both parents and teachers.

Despite these shortcomings, the demand in most communities was immediate and overwhelming. In the heart of the more crowded ghettos the centers were besieged. In marginal areas the response was slower and many centers remained half- or even quarter-full. The administrators wavered between relenting on income ceilings in order to increase enrollment and cracking down on the ceiling limitation in fear of exposure. Some children were admitted, expelled and readmitted as rules changed. Teachers and supervisors coped with contradictory rules that changed from day to day, always ready, if not willing, to take the blame for having made the wrong guess. Meanwhile they were bombarded with threats and slogans from higher-ups, such as "dedication can conquer all," and "if you don't like it, quit." If they suggested innovations, they were told that "we're part of the public school system, and it's not done that way." When they complained during the early months about the absence of blocks, dolls, paints, paper, etc., they read in *The Philadelphia Bulletin* that their director, Mrs. Elizabeth T. McCabe, had stated, "I don't care about tables or chairs. I'm interested in dedicated teachers who want to work with children. Sometimes I wish I didn't have a whole lot of equipment. It can get in the way of teaching."

They had only to pick up *The Inquirer* to learn that Mrs. McCabe, a Negro, considered herself an expert on the parents whose children they were teaching: "If they didn't have children at home, they'd spend more time in the beer gardens than they would at work. I know this commu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nity. Personally I wish we could take children from these mothers all day long." At a Friday training session, Mrs. McCabe informed the teachers that the Board of Education was impressed with the "special, unique and unusual quality" of their teamwork, which she attributed to an atmosphere in which every teacher felt free to punish any child, even if it wasn't "her" child.

II

Demoralization aside, teachers were most confused when they tried to comprehend the purpose of the program and the specific means by which they were supposed to carry it out. Consultants from the federal program had talked during the early training period about the importance of visual, sensual, concrete materials, about free play and non-teacher-dominated activity, about the concept of "play as child's work," about activity appropriate to stages of maturity, and so forth. But a list of what was to be "taught and learned" was handed out and mimeoed sheets were periodically distributed listing techniques quite the opposite of those recommended by the consultants.

Friday training sessions were supposedly the answer to the lack of experience with which most teachers came into the program. But they soon deteriorated—starting late and ending by lunchtime. While children are expected to sit and learn for over five hours a day in our school system, it was generally conceded that only two to three hours could be asked of teachers. Pep talks and introductions from Mrs. McCabe took up the first hour, sometimes extended by group singing or amateur talent shows. The director and her husband, who is supervisor in charge of cultural enrichment (which has so far meant a trip to see a worn-out Santa Claus at a downtown department store), played a violin–piano duet, "Danny Boy." A speech on the glories of marriage was made to an "expectant bride." Everyone was urged to share her little adventures and talents with "our one big happy family."

Meanwhile, back in the classroom, the teachers and children carry on. The caliber of the teachers and supervisors and the present cautious enthusiasm of the community has produced a superficial impression of success in many centers: children seem happy, parents satisfied, and teachers feel some children have changed for the better. Since an organized program of research appears to be in the hands of the director's husband—who has not had any background in this field—it may be a long time till we can properly evaluate the program. In the absence of a controlled and overall evaluation, one is forced to conclude that almost everything is occurring somewhere and sometimes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Most supervisors—insofar as they have an effect on the educational practices of their teachers—favor non-authoritarian classrooms with controlled but extensive free play in the general tradition of nursery school practice, with perhaps some extra emphasis on language development. On the whole, they agree with Martin Deutsch, the most eminent expert in this area, that these programs must aim at reinforcing whatever self-confidence and positive self-image deprived children bring to school. But at least one supervisor has advocated spankings for disobedience, water over the head for tantrums, and still more medieval techniques.

The teachers are baffled. Most are open to persuasion and eager and willing to learn at this stage. In a year at most they will have settled into patterns which will be hard to alter. They are skeptical about traditional nursery school values and techniques. They do not know why middle-class children should go to nursery school or why early childhood school experts have advocated the nondirective, freewheeling environment. They tend to equate a child-centered nursery school with baby-sitting, and a teacher-dominated room with "learning." They settle for gimmicks which will meet the outward appearances of "play," while in fact they really are teaching counting, "nice" words, better pronunciation, the alphabet, phonetics, colors, shapes, better manners, please and thank you. They are constantly on the look-out for a didactic message to impart to their charges.

"What have I done today to prepare these children for kindergarten or first grade," is the latent worry in the minds of many teachers. And while most have raised their own children in an environment of considerable freedom, they wonder if deprived children don't need greater discipline. Shouldn't "getting them ready" mean preparing them for the harsher aspects of reality? If they have to stand in line to go to the toilet, or say the Pledge of Allegiance in kindergarten, maybe we should introduce them to such practices now?

It is often the best intentions that lead teachers into such attitudes: they want to "do something" for these children and it is difficult for most teachers to avoid translating this desire into an imposing and manipulative classroom approach. They are restrained by the emphasis given in the training period on free play and by their sensitivity to the children's reactions to manipulation. Their manipulative techniques are generally nonpunitive, and, in contrast to many ghetto public school teachers, they demonstrate much warmth and affection for their charges.

On the other hand, they are encouraged into stricter and more dominating techniques by parents and community laymen, who feel that their children have been short-changed in ghetto schools in the past and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who tend to equate harsh discipline and the three R's with Real Education. The parents are eager for their children to adapt, and willingly support strict discipline and high conformity. They have been told their children fail because they misbehave, don't listen, squirm and cause trouble. This is what they tell the teachers, who hardly know what to believe and who are hardly in a position to make up for the lack of a consistent educational program.

III

From top to bottom the purpose of this pre-school program is almost never squarely faced. No one stops to examine the nature of the educational failure which has occurred in our poverty schools. Everyone agrees rather glibly that the children of poverty—and particularly of ghetto poverty—are performing badly in the lower grades and dropping out of high school at an alarming rate. And everyone notes that these children show their most symptomatic failure in the areas dealing with reading and the "language arts." While it is agreed that ghetto schools are incompetently staffed, under-equipped and overcrowded, most observers feel that something even more basic goes wrong with ghetto children. The notion is that they *come* to the schools with too many educational handicaps. In view of the fact that middle-class children often have one to three years more actual formal schooling by the time they are six, not to speak of the informal educational advantages of more prosperous, motivated families, it is natural that they should do much better in school. If poor children, the theory goes, could get some of this additional formal and informal "head start," they too would enter school better prepared for success.

But this is an insufficient and in fact misleading statement of the problem. It ignores the evidence that Harlem children enter school with less of a handicap than they have six years later—after the school system has "enriched" them. It ignores the fact that 25 percent of the children in North Philadelphia schools at the end of first grade seem to be college-bound on the basis of achievement and IQ, compared to only 4 percent at the end of sixth grade. It ignores the fact that most poor children do learn the mechanics of reading and compete more or less successfully until the fourth grade where they reach an early and final plateau. It ignores the fact that in the early years poor children are more conforming, quieter, and more amenable to school routines than children in schools with high academic achievement levels.

Each of these facts points to deep rifts within the general society in regard to the purposes of the War on Poverty. And the teaching methods

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that each individual teacher tends to fall back on are likely to reflect his feelings about social change in general.

IV

In their attitudes toward education, teachers fall into three roughly defined groups which we shall imprecisely label (1) public school traditionalists, (2) reformers, and (3) radicals.

Those whom we call public school traditionalists want to continue the standard patterns of dealing with poor children, but to start earlier. There is no question in these teachers' minds where the fault lies: with the poor themselves. Such an approach emphasizes discipline, rules, morality, authority, and the three R's. This outlook would have it that poor children cannot afford the luxury, too rampant among middle-class "brats" anyway, of a free and child-centered classroom. Only through a willingness to learn by old-fashioned methods (which worked so well for the poor in the past), will they develop the necessary know-how. Some hold these views with considerable sophistication. Others are merely ignorant of historical fact (the poor of the past rarely received an education beyond the sixth grade and were considered successfully schooled if they had mastered the mechanics of reading and arithmetic). They are ignorant as well of the nature of ghetto schools (which are *already* authoritarian and nineteenth-century oriented), and of the kind of problems that poor children produce in schools (severe discipline problems are not common until they reach that fourth grade learning plateau). Many teachers naturally but incorrectly assume that lower-class parents are belligerent. In fact, while hostility and fear toward the school is common among the disadvantaged, they generally defer to the school on all matters of discipline, and back the school against their own children in times of conflict or trouble.

If the argument were to go on in the arena of theory, problems of fact would not worry us. But given the malice or ignorance of many of those who direct this program, the primitive physical conditions teachers are faced with, and a general downgrading of the need for serious training, the ideology of traditional school thinking may win out by default, as it has in our city grade schools. The more independent, sophisticated and forceful teachers who want to help children and are sensitive to their pains are rapidly driven out of the program or forced to make so many compromises that they soon bring only a small part of their original spirit to school.

In opposition to this trend are the "reformers" in the field. Unlike the traditionalists, they have few rigid answers, and hold many diverse viewpoints. But on the whole they accept the idea that "deprived"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

children lack a home environment conducive to learning, and that good pre-school experiences of the sort middle-class children naturally receive are necessary to academic success. They seek enthusiastically therefore to remake these less fortunate children into something more akin to the successful middle-class five-year-old.

The reformers claim that the greatest difference between deprived and middle-class children lies in their respective language abilities. The deprived child is said to be held back by inadequate or nonexistent experiences out of which language skill might develop, and an environment where little verbal or written interchange exists that can serve as an example or as a laboratory for the child.

Reformers usually favor an environment of security and pleasure in which children could identify new experiences with warm, happy associations. The new experiences fall into two classifications: (1) good and consistent examples of politeness, middle-class articulation, vocabulary and neatness; and (2) a planned program to introduce the children through experiences, games, drills, etc. to various habits, manners, skills, and language arts already familiar to the middle-class child entering kindergarten. They will play house and, as they do so, learn how to set the table, say "please pass the butter," answer the door or phone politely, etc. They will take trips to the farm and play farm lotto so that they are familiar with words like "duck" and "sheep" (which appear so often in IQ tests and primary readers). As far as possible, the teacher is to present the children with an attractive picture of what life could be and is like in the larger world, as differentiated from what it is like in their own dismal communities.

The "radicals," while they share many reforming values, would rather remake the school than the child. They are likely to question whether lower-class children *really are* lacking in the rich experiential base for good language development or in long-run goals for success. They are likely to point instead to the special abilities which lower-class children have developed to cope with hardship and uncertainty. They argue that such strengths have in the past led to withdrawal in the face of certain threatening situations, such as school. The very strength of lower-class children has of necessity—the necessity to survive—produced resistance, apathy, fatalism, and superstition. Attitudes which help one to survive in a community closed off from escape can be weaknesses in a world where intellectual growth and creativity are possible. The "culture of poverty," however, cannot be eliminated by pretending it doesn't exist for four hours a day—which is what setting the children a nice, middle-class example amounts to.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As a first step, ghetto schools must realize that change begins with self-acceptance. They must find ways to utilize the "culture of poverty" itself, to begin with the child's own experiences, good and bad, to involve his parents and his community, and to let each child's growth develop from his already functioning personality rather than cut off from it and rootless. Only a child who comes to school as himself is capable of going beyond mechanical learning skills. The child who shifts upon entering to a special school personality, a shell divorced from all meaningful life experience, will leave both the shell and what he learns through it at the door when he goes out again.

Even with the best of intentions, a school that eliminates all that is familiar to a young child will be perceived by him as a threat to his self-esteem and identity. Radical teachers argue that we must find ways of teaching these youngsters based on their own backgrounds, families, language abilities and experiences. Further, these circumstances must be accepted without the intrusion of moral judgment. If the child is truly given a chance to grow in terms of his own awareness, he will eventually be able to decide for himself what kind of world he wants to live in and what kind of person he wants to become.

V

Education alone will not resolve the issues at stake in the War on Poverty. And as long as the public permits widespread discrimination in employment, housing, and public services, it is not likely to spend the money to equalize educational opportunity. Under such circumstances the poor will continue to receive much of their more creative education from informal educational institutions that arise within the ghetto and that will arise tomorrow in new forms—through the civil rights movement, community organization, political movements, etc. But since much education does take place, for good or ill, within the formal framework of our publicly-supported schools, and many of tomorrow's choices will be determined by the way the schools educate, the alternative methods of pre-school education pose a critical choice. The ideals of childhood education can be translated for lower-class children with the emphasis on democratic purposes and respect for the child's integrity, or they can become tools to mold the poor but essentially keep them in their place. Education can accept society's need to reform itself or simply pretend to reform the child. It will never be argued so crudely, but these are the issues at stake. And, ironically, if those in control fail to learn anything, or if we fail to produce the kind of pressure that will force them into new paths of educational effort, the addition of two vulnerable

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

years to the present school tenure may simply produce an exaggeration of the benumbing and depressive effect that ghetto schools are already having. Under such circumstances the highly vaunted Head Start will only be a head start into a dead end.

Joseph B. Judge

Brownsville: A Neighborhood in Trouble

In Brownsville, a section of Brooklyn once almost entirely Jewish but now radically changed, the War on Poverty is a misnomer. The wars that occur in Brownsville are mostly wars of the poor against the Economic Opportunity Board and the poor against one another. The Brownsville population of 125,000 Negroes, Puerto Ricans, and aging Jews presents to the rare visitor a microcosm of all the city's social ills. It is a community of unrelieved poverty, dirt, decay, drunkenness, and despair. Its condition is the result of forty years of neglect. In *A Walker in the City,* a reminiscence of his youth in Brownsville, Alfred Kazin says that his one prevailing desire was to escape. This continues to be the obsession of the average Brownsville resident. Most despair of life ever getting any better while they stay here. The turnover of population is alarming. In one public school, from September to January of last year, there was a 100 percent turnover of school population, 1,500 on register and 1,500 on transfers.

Hasn't the War on Poverty changed all this? After all, the city has announced that Brownsville is one of the poverty areas where things will be radically altered. Unfortunately, a large percentage of people in Brownsville does not read newspapers and consequently has heard nothing about the War on Poverty. Those few who have heard the news have become inured to promises. And promises are all they have received. It is almost unbelievable, but up to July 4, 1966, exactly one half of one percent of the total funds sent to New York City under the Federal Economic Opportunity Act had found its way to Brownsville. The only existing program was Head Start—which is funded under the Board of Education. Finally, there was no unique Brownsville Plan which had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been funded, although a vast Total Action Plan had been presented for funding.

Yet this is not to say that the War on Poverty has not influenced Brownsville. It was the main impetus for the organization of the Brownsville Community Council. Efforts to organize the Council and to give it purpose lagged until it became clear that Brownsville was to receive funds through the Economic Opportunities Act.

Under the Wagner administration, it became evident that the community organizations which made the most noise received the most money. Yet due to its rapid population changes in the last decade, Brownsville had no community-based political or social organization. The economically deprived Negroes and the recently migrated Puerto Ricans who are the new residents of Brownsville were too badly disorganized themselves to think in terms of organizing the community. They were too much occupied with the daily struggle for existence to think in any wider terms. Politically, the community was linked with East Flatbush, Canarsie, or East New York, all white middle-income communities which provided the leaders. Nor were religious leaders in evidence. There was no big Baptist Church to produce Negro leaders, and the Spanish storefront churches by principle disavow participation in community activities. They consider it evil.

The first stirrings of community action were sponsored by a Youth Board community organizer, Mr. Arthur Lappan. Action began with the organization of two committees, one for housing improvements and the other for youth organization. Their achievements were indifferent, but at least they brought out people who were interested in community improvements. In their struggles to remind the political power structure of its obligations to Brownsville, they found that their voice was too weak. It was not a community voice; it was to the city a voice of a few among the poor to whom no political debt was owed and who had no political strength. This realization was the beginning of the formation of the Brownsville Community Council. To achieve the widest possible base, membership was opened to organizations in the Brownsville area. Each participating organization has two delegates, which prevents any large organization from taking over the Council and guarantees that it will be the voice of the poor.

The Council's planning, with the help of the Youth Board Community Organization office, was sound, but the Council lacked a clear purpose and attracted little interest—until the announcement that Brownsville would be a poverty target area. From then on, the Brownsville Community Council aspired to become the funding agency for War

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on Poverty money. In actuality, the Council has become an organization to fight the Economic Opportunities Board. Since it presented its Total Action Plan for funding, it has spent its time writing letters and telegrams of protest about the failure of the government to keep its commitments, participating in demonstrations, joining other protesting groups, and publicly criticizing the vacillation of the War on Poverty. Once again it appears to the poor of Brownsville that the white middle-income political establishment is the enemy.

Just a few days ago it was announced that a badly curtailed Summer Program has been approved. Exactly two days were given to hire a staff, obtain materials, and provide space for the Program. Another feature of the plan, a Released Energies Program for teen-agers which, because of its crucial character, was presumably earmarked for approval, was rejected the day it was due to begin. The myopic bureaucrat who turned it down explained that there were similar teen-age programs elsewhere in Brownsville. There was exactly one, able to accommodate about 100 teen-agers out of 7,500. Fortunately, a city agency was able to restore the program on a very limited budget.

Another by-product of the War on Poverty in Brownsville is increased political activity. In the beginning of the Council's history, this activity took the form of support for various contending candidates. It all began with reapportionment of the State Assembly Districts. Brownsville became a geographic assembly district, and the first local political battle took place in the primary of 1965. Since the candidates were all Negro, the contention did not follow racial lines. The debates among the candidates tended to descend into personal attacks on one another's honesty or sincerity. Questions from the audience ran along the same lines. Many members of the Executive Board were very active in the campaign and their suspicions and attacks often exploded at Board meetings. The poor do not forget their quarrels very quickly.

Now, however, political contention has taken a new turn. In the most recent primaries, the Puerto Ricans presented a slate of candidates for the first time. They have numerous politically oriented organizations in the community, but heretofore they had always supported one of the regular candidates. This time, their primary candidates were badly defeated by the entirely Negro opposition. It must be said that the Puerto Ricans did seek Negro candidates for their ticket but were unable to persuade any. This Puerto Rican effort was the culmination of tensions between the Negroes and Puerto Ricans on the Executive Board of the Community Council. There are frequent, and at times intemperate,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clashes between Negroes and Puerto Ricans at Board meetings. The Negroes really control the Community Council, which is perfectly proper since they are a majority in the community. At the present time they appear to have closed ranks and to be standing together. Some have publicly expressed the opinion that only Negroes should represent Brownsville on city-wide Boards or Councils. This new attitude is curious in view of their past divisions and dissensions. Whether it is the result of a new awareness of their potential strength or a reaction to the Puerto Ricans' political opposition is not clear at the moment. What is clear is that Negro leaders are rallying their forces. This, of course, pushes the Puerto Ricans into the position of having to be the opposition, a task not entirely unwelcome to them. They have considerable suspicion as to whether their people are getting a fair share of the jobs in the Head Start program in Brownsville. There probably is no real justice to the complaint because the director of the Brownsville Community Council Head Start seems most anxious to employ Spanish-speaking workers. Unfortunately, the number of Puerto Rican applicants for higher paying jobs in Head Start is small because they lack the qualifications demanded by the Board of Education. But the Puerto Rican members of the Community Council are not convinced of this and the present stance of some Negroes on the Executive Board is not discouraging their suspicions of prejudice.

It is to the credit of both the Negro and Puerto Rican leaders in the Council that they have not allowed their differences to spill over into the community at large. In all their public statements they call for good relations between the two groups and urge both communities to live in peace. Although tensions are present, there has been no major racial outbreak in Brownsville. One of the big reasons for this, I think, is the consciousness of one common bond uniting practically everybody in Brownsville—poverty. We also stand together in a common conviction that we are being short-changed in the War on Poverty.

Despite this inner contention, the small part of the community's total-action plan which has been approved has been quite effective. This is the Summer Program. After only three days, all centers are oversubscribed, and parents are trying to transfer their children from the Board of Education summer program which began earlier to the centers funded under the Brownsville Community Council grant. An evening teen-age program is attracting a large number of youngsters who in the past have proved most difficult to engage in any organized activity.

There are two chief reasons for this success. The first is a good, clear-thinking, tough-minded director, Major Owens, who knows and understands the community and who has the good sense to abstain from

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

any public participation in Council squabbles. The second reason is that the Council is conducting its program through neighborhood member organizations who are bound to be more in contact with the people most in need. From what one hears, the Summer Program is reaching many more people in an effective way than programs in other, better-known poverty areas. I think that the middle-income establishment of other poverty areas have much to learn from the poor of Brownsville.

Another plus in Brownsville is the group of young priests working here. None can aspire to an official position of leadership in the community because they are all white Americans. None has any political ambition. Their object is to serve the community. Strangely, they are in far closer contact with the real hard-core poor of Brownsville than are any of the Negro or Puerto Rican leaders. They deal with the poor on the level of their personal problems and represent them on the community level. They have put their own personal funds into the opening and maintenance of three or four Social Action Centers, one of which is called Christians and Jews United for Social Action, and another is Brownsville Social Action. From these centers they have organized demonstrations against slum-lords; they have led clean-up campaigns and involved teen-agers in them; they have helped to enlist members in the Welfare Clients League whom they guided in a demonstration at City Hall.

The meetings of these young priests are dedicated to clarifying their purpose and to avoiding any personal gain or aggrandizement from their involvement in the community. In their devotion and scrupulous self-examination, they are a healthy New Breed.

The government's part in Brownsville's War on Poverty is both hesitant and small. But the efforts of the community itself have been increasing, and may yet provide an example of how the poor can help themselves if once they are given some initial means for help.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

David Spitz

PURE TOLERANCE:

A Critique of Criticisms

Ever since men climbed down from the trees and found it necessary to establish ground rules, they have fought over what those rules shall be. They have fought longest, and perhaps most bitterly, over the most fundamental rule of all—the rule by which the ground rules themselves shall be determined. For he who controls the ground rules is in a position to control the game.

That the rule of tolerance is this fundamental rule is revealed by the fact that dictatorships exclude it and democratic states make it central to their enterprise. Only in democratic states are governments established and changed in response to the free play of conflicting opinions.

This—the securing of responsible government—is not of course the only reason for supporting tolerance. Those who defend it also contend that tolerance makes for diversity, which is essential to progress and the development of individuality, and thus to the common good. They also believe that tolerance, at least in a pluralist society, is the only principle under which diverse groups can live together without resorting either to mutual slaughter or to an authoritarian regime that will impose one group's creed on others.

The argument for intolerance, in contrast, is generally put forward by men who mean to have their way but fear that free discussion will "mislead" other men—either because those others are less wise or virtuous than they or because conditions are such as to favor the false doctrine.

I

Now, the classic case for tolerance has been set forth in John Stuart Mill's celebrated essay *On Liberty*. Ever since Mill published that essay in 1859, the critics of tolerance have been diligently at work refuting him. It needs to be said, if unkindly, that one obvious reason for this is that later critics have recognized the difficulties that earlier critics have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had with him. It is a mark of no mean significance that this process still continues; indeed, it has become the foundation of a flourishing industry.

As a part-time member of this guild (though one essentially in sympathy with Mill), I can do no other than commend it to the newcomers. I ask only that they first familiarize themselves with already-existing products. Then they might spare their readers, if not themselves, the labor of re-encountering ancient formulations under the guise of a new suit of phrases; and in doing so they might also learn to distinguish reputable from shoddy merchandise. For it needs also to be said that much of what is produced by this industry today is neither novel nor imaginative nor important. That is the judgment I propose in regard to a new book, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance,* co-authored by Herbert Marcuse, Barrington Moore, and Robert Wolff.*

What distinguishes the three essays that constitute this book is *not* an awareness, and hence transcendence, of these elementary considerations. It is rather the marshalling and occasionally the revision of old arguments to attack Mill from what might (for the moment) be called radical perspectives. Traditionally, Mill has been identified with the Left and his critics with the Right. This ideological cleavage by no means accounts for all of Mill's critics; some of them—Dorothy Fosdick, J. C. Rees, and Isaiah Berlin, for example—have dealt with Mill and his arguments in terms divorced from such partisanship. But it accounts for a good many of them, including, I venture to think, the three critics who here attack Mill's plea for complete freedom of thought and expression on the ground, so they say, that it prevents, or at the very least militates against, the supremacy of "correct" ideas, that is, "their" ideas. And because they profess to be of the radical Left, Mill stands condemned (in their eyes) as a protagonist of the "wrong" ideas, as a purveyor of a political philosophy that safeguards the *status quo.*

The keynote of their argument—on which, despite other differences, they are agreed—is contained in this introductory sentence: "For each of us the prevailing theory and practice of tolerance turned out on examination to be in varying degrees hypocritical masks to cover appalling political realities." And here I must begin with a confession of inadequacy: I have tried, but I am unable to make sense of this statement. What, apart from its strident terminology, does it mean? Is the theory referred to one that accounts for the practice or one that articulates an ideal to which that practice should conform? If it accounts for the practice, then the theory is not a mask but a revelation of the

* *A Critique of Pure Tolerance,* by Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Herbert Marcuse. Boston: Beacon Press, 1965. 117 pp. $2.45.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

realities. If it articulates an ideal, then the theory stands not as a description of what is but as a prescriptive norm, and hence as a criterion of judgment by which those realities are to be judged. If it is replied that theory here means what people say, then we are simply confronted by the usual dichotomy between rhetoric and performance, between espoused or intended conduct and actual behavior. But a theory is never this; it is always an attempt to describe the true reality—our function, Klee somewhere said, is "not to reveal the visible but to make visible the real"—or to prescribe the proper conduct. Then, if we omit the word "theory" and look only at the word "practice," all that the statement seems to mean is that people do not behave very nicely, which is hardly a piercing insight.

In what sense, then, can the theory or practice of tolerance be termed hypocritical? Presumably in the sense that the theory is at odds with, and a rationalization of, the practice. But this means only that the theory (as explanation rather than as prescription) is deficient, that in fact it is not a theory at all but an ideology.

What, finally, is meant by the phrase "prevailing theory"? Is it Mill's theory of liberty, or what the writers call the doctrine of "pure tolerance"? If so, there is obviously a considerable gap not only between Mill's teaching and current (e.g., American) practice, but also, I think, between that teaching and whatever may be said to be the dominant legal and political view (or views) of liberty. Is it some other theory, a doctrine more in keeping with what our three writers are pleased to call the realities of an industrial democracy? If so, this is not identified. What they attack, then, is not *the* prevailing doctrine of liberty, and not always, as will become clear, Mill's doctrine, but doctrines and conditions imputed to Mill and which, in their view, constitute the hallmark of a sorry liberalism.

Let us consider the contentions of our three critics.

II

Take, first, the argument of Robert Paul Wolff. I am not altogether sure whether he misunderstands Mill or intends his readers to misunderstand Mill, but to the extent that I may read him correctly he depicts Mill at one point as an exponent of psychological egoism and at another as an advocate of individual liberty free of all social restraints. Neither of these characterizations accurately describes Mill. He also asserts that Mill defended the freedoms of thought and of action so long as these did not harm others. But Mill clearly and explicitly distinguished his defense of freedom of thought, which he made an absolute,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from freedom of action, which was conditioned by its consequences. Wolff makes the important point that tolerance should not be confused with neutrality or condescension but should be recognized as a positive good; however, though Wolff does not mention it, this is also central to Mill's thought.

What is of interest, then, is not Wolff's critique of Mill—which is, strictly speaking, essentially irrelevant—but the fact that his essay, though it is entitled "Beyond Tolerance," deals less with tolerance than with the conditions that make it ineffective. Wolff believes that tolerance is a doctrine that has emerged from and is only appropriate to a particular stage of historical development, namely, the stage of democratic pluralism. But—and this is what he is most concerned to show—democratic pluralism is no longer adequate to the so-called stage of modernity in which we now find ourselves, and for two reasons primarily: it discriminates against certain disadvantaged social groups or interests—those that are outside the Establishment, that lack "legitimate representation," and that are not consequently given a place or a voice in society—and it discriminates against certain social policies, most directly those that look to the promotion of the common good rather than to the satisfaction of diverse particular interests or claims. As a result, democratic pluralism in its concrete application—though not, Wolff adds, in its theory—supports inequality, maintains the *status quo*, blocks social change. What is required, Wolff concludes, is a new philosophy of community, of the common good, one that goes "beyond pluralism and beyond tolerance."

Now it is curious that one who, like Wolff, relates ideas in near-deterministic fashion to particular stages of historical development—and I must bypass here the familiar and age-old controversy over this asserted but still unproved thesis—should ignore the fact that earlier theories of tolerance, those of Locke and Milton, for example, and perhaps even of Socrates in the *Apology* before them, were not merely arguments for a *qualified* tolerance, but were in a very real sense also arguments consistent with a kind of homogeneous, or largely homogeneous, society. To go beyond pluralism is presumably to plead for a new type of homogeneity, and hence for a new kind of orthodoxy; for from what individuals or groups, and for what purpose, will new and diverse ideas then emerge?

What makes Mill distinctive, and vitally important, is that while he recognized and even pleaded for a sense of national cohesion and for the pursuit of the public interest, he insisted along with this that it was necessary to respect and to build upon a certain heterogeneity, that progress required *both* the promotion of the common good and the further-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ance of individual and group differences. Consequently, in line with his utilitarian philosophy, he argued for the absolute toleration of ideas and for the maximum toleration of variety in practices. He sought a unity that would contain rather than eliminate diversity. In these terms, to argue against pluralism and for the idea of a common good, as if these were opposing and mutually exclusive principles, is to argue for a self-defeating proposition; for it may well be—and I am convinced it is—that democratic pluralism, properly understood and properly institutionalized, is precisely what defines or constitutes the core of the common good.

It is noteworthy that Wolff nowhere defines or articulates the nature of his common good; nor does he set out a program for its realization. Were he to attempt to do so, he might find, as many another writer has found, that in a multi-group society the common good requires not the rejection of pluralism but the determination of the appropriate kinds and degrees of pluralism compatible with a political goal. Otherwise there can emerge only a deadening, even if new, conformity. However this may be, if it is true, as Wolff admits, that the fault is not in the theory of pluralism, or of tolerance, but in the shortcomings of its practice, why does he attack the theory of pure tolerance? Why does he not focus instead on the conditions—whether of structure, institutions, attitudes, or all of these combined—that hinder its attainment and impair or delimit its free exercise, and on measures calculated to redress those deficiencies? For it is not Mill and his theory of liberty but the arrangements and practices of modern industrial society that are clearly the issues at stake.

III

Barrington Moore's essay, "Tolerance and the Scientific Outlook," is a more sophisticated and relevant effort. In part, this is because Moore is aware of many of the foregoing considerations and avoids certain elementary confusions. In part, it is because Moore restates and builds upon a number of Mill's arguments—though he does not, curiously, acknowledge this indebtedness. In part, finally, it is because Moore advances an interesting argument of his own.

With respect to Mill, the most important of Moore's restatements is the proposition that the intellectual's task is not to agitate or fight for a particular doctrine or ideal "but to find and speak the truth, whatever the political consequences may be." The latter part of this proposition is, of course, standard Millian doctrine, as may be evidenced by Mill's familiar plea (in his essay "On Civilization") that the very

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cornerstone and object of education "is to call forth the greatest possible quantity of intellectual *power,* and to inspire the intense *love of truth;* and this without a particle of regard to the results to which the exercise of that power may lead. . . ." But the first part of Moore's statement does not, alas, confront the obvious question: What if one's discovery of the truth is at the same time the discovery of a correct doctrine or ideal? Does his commitment to the truth not require him then to advocate, even agitate for, that doctrine? Does the intellectual not then become a partisan *malgré lui*? If I am to infer Moore's answer from the content of this essay, it is clearly positive. But Moore does not explicitly say so; nor does he pursue the implications of that conclusion. Mill, of course, essayed both roles, precisely because he saw no necessary incompatibility between them.

Moore properly maintains that historical disputes can often be settled by an appeal to the evidence. But does it follow that "tolerance for different 'interpretations' based on different *Weltanschauungen* merely befuddles the issue"? Or that "a scientific attitude toward human society [does not] necessarily induce a conservative tolerance of the existing order"? Clearly, what constitutes relevant evidence is itself a matter of interpretation; and the issue is not whether tolerance or a scientific attitude implies acceptance (or, for that matter, rejection) of a particular interpretation or social order—it does not—but whether it implies acceptance of one's right to entertain and advance *ideas* that defend (or reject) a particular interpretation or social order. When Moore says, as he does, that tolerance of conflicting interpretations befuddles the issue, does he mean to suggest that the natural consequences of a serious examination of alternative doctrines will always, or mostly, lead to the adoption of the wrong doctrine? This, I think, can only be affirmed by repudiating the value of reason itself, which Moore does not and of course will not do. But if reason itself is not at fault, the rational examination of alternatives cannot lead to befuddlement. What makes for confusion, instead, is the intrusion of unreason, of prejudices or interests or the operation of weighted conditions that militate against the free play of intellect. But then Moore's indictment should turn not on the principle of tolerance but (as with Wolff) on the social conditions in which tolerance is practiced—conditions that deny reason its day in court or that perpetuate the deficiencies of reasoners. All of which would seem to be confirmed by Moore himself when he says that "every idea, including the most dangerous and apparently absurd ones, deserves to have its credentials examined."

This, however, is not the message that Moore is most anxious to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

communicate. He is concerned rather to argue three things: (a) that the secular and rational (i.e., scientific) outlook, by which he means neither "technicist science" nor "academic humanism" but a conception of science that embraces "whatever is established by sound reasoning and evidence," is adequate both for understanding and evaluating human affairs; (b) that this outlook is able, in principle, to yield clear-cut answers to important questions, including the question of "when to be tolerant and when tolerance becomes intellectual cowardice and evasion"; and (c) finally, and most importantly, that in the present historical moment it may well behoove us to abandon the "nauseating hypocrisy" of "liberal rhetoric," to refuse to work under the prevailing system, and to consider "the conditions under which the resort to violence is justified in the name of freedom."

This is a hard teaching, but not for that reason to be avoided. We must first ask, however, whether it is also true. And here, it seems to me, the answer is by no means as simple as Moore takes it to be.

Consider Moore's claim—(a) and (b)—that objective knowledge and objective evaluation of human institutions are possible, thereby yielding correct and unambiguous answers, independent of individual whims and preferences. If Moore really admires Morris R. Cohen, whom he cites approvingly, he should have borne in mind Cohen's important distinction between the meaning of what is asserted in verified scientific theory and the degree of certainty of its verification. This certainty is always a matter of degree; it is never absolute; for what is verified is the theorems, not the postulates, of the theory. This is why Cohen, like Mill, believed that scientific *method* encourages toleration even as it enables us to differentiate beliefs and opinions which have been confirmed from those which have not.

Now Moore avows his commitment to scientific method. He recognizes that as a method it is a procedure for the testing of ideas, from which it follows that no conclusion, including the contents and very conception of science itself, is permanently above and beyond criticism and, possibly, fundamental change. How, then, can he confuse the principle of tolerance, which at one point he explicitly equates with this scientific procedure, with the acceptance of a particular doctrine or system of order, or assert the possibility not merely of objective knowledge but of objective evaluation, of correct answers to human problems? This is not to deny the relevance and utility of scientific method in the evaluation and solution of such problems; it is only to suggest that the most scientific evaluation, along with its alleged clear-cut answers, is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

still but tentative rather than absolute, relative to our assumptions and values, and always subject to revision.

Moore, however, confident of his "truths," seems prepared to reject the prevailing system and to adopt a revolutionary attitude. So long as three conditions are met—that the prevailing regime is unnecessarily repressive, that a revolutionary situation is in fact ripening, and that through a rough calculus of revolutionary violence one can reasonably believe that the costs in human suffering inherent in the continuation of the *status quo* outweigh those to be incurred in the revolution and its aftermath—the resort to violence, Moore holds, is justified in the name of freedom.

It is not easy for one who views the prevailing regime (or regimes) with considerable unhappiness, and who would consequently welcome certain fundamental changes in the social order, to cavil at Moore's revolutionary posture. Clearly, unless one is prepared to say that under no circumstances may men rebel, that men must remain always at the base of even the most burdensome pyramids of unjust power, there are moments in history when the resort to violence is fully warranted. That many contemporary nations, including the United States, celebrate their own past revolutions is only the more obvious of many instances in point. Thus, as an abstract statement of conditions that require and justify violence to overturn an indecent social order, Moore's argument merits respect. (Though it should not go unnoted that he here goes counter to his own earlier contention that the intellectual is not to be a partisan in the cause of this, or any other, ideal.)

Nevertheless, if we apply his (very far from precise) conditions to the modern industrial societies of the Western world, his argument becomes less than conclusive. For one thing, it is not at all clear that Western industrial societies are so oppressive that violent overthrow of the entire system is justified. For another, it is questionable that the cultural and human drabness to which Moore presumably objects is, in fact, amenable to correction through political action. For still another, the applicability of his second and third conditions is more than problematical. Nor do his conditions take into account certain useful and perhaps necessary distinctions: those, for example, between a class and a national revolution, or between a revolution initiated to seize power and a revolution, like the National Socialist Revolution, imposed after power has been effectively seized. Finally, his argument either neglects or gives insufficient weight to certain risks attendant upon all revolutionary efforts. Of these inconvenient but ever-present risks, I have space here to note only two.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

One is the corrupting effects of the revolution itself, which often degrade and alter the characters and principles of the revolutionaries themselves, so that men who emerge at the top after a successful revolution are rarely the same men (even if they retain the same names and carry the same bodies) as those who made the revolution, with all that this implies in the way of altered ends, new hatreds and antagonisms, and new repressions. To be sure, some consequences of a successful revolution may be praiseworthy, e.g., the institution of certain reforms designed to eliminate or abate injustices and discontents. But other consequences are more than likely to be catastrophic. Of these the most immediately probable is the suppression of freedom of speech and political opposition. For it is not uncommon that governments which have survived revolutionary attempts, or which have come to power through revolution, seek with grim determination to eliminate the possibility of further revolutionary efforts. This, certainly, would seem to be one of the more evident lessons of revolutionary movements that have come to power since, say, the Second World War. Thus the appeal to revolution often invites the destruction of the very principle that makes the revolution possible—the principle of tolerance.

The second dangerous risk is the high improbability of success. Paul Kecskemeti has called attention to the striking fact that, despite all the revolutionary talk of the past century, if we except the Iberian peninsula, there have been no serious attempts at internal revolution in peacetime Europe since 1848–49; and if we consider the abortive Hungarian Revolution of 1956 (which took place after Kecskemeti wrote), the point is underscored that in the modern industrial state, with its specialized technology and advanced systems of weaponry, and with the support of powerful external armies and governments, civil revolt is in the ordinary course of events most unlikely to succeed. In fact, the normal complement of apathy, contentment, and especially fear —not of sporadic outbreaks but of wholesale violence and disorder— makes it more than unlikely that the masses will venture to disrupt the prevailing system of order by revolutionary means. It is, then, one thing to call for a revolutionary attitude, quite another to call for and expect revolutionary action. (I speak, let it be emphasized again, not of primitive or developing societies, but only of modern industrial societies; for it is only to such states that our authors apply their arguments.)

Once again, therefore, we are back to the central confusion inherent in this criticism: that which equates the principle of tolerance with the restrictive practices of states avowedly committed to that principle. The criticism actually testifies only to the limitations of those

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

practices, and thus leaves untouched—at least at this level of argument—Mill's plea for freedom of thought and expression.

IV

We come now to the most extreme and convoluted, yet in some ways the most intriguing, of our three indictments of pure tolerance: Herbert Marcuse's essay "Repressive Tolerance." It may seem outrageous to suggest that this very title is a contradiction in terms, as are also other phrases employed by Marcuse, for example "totalitarian democracy" and "the democratic educational dictatorship of free men"; but I shall make this suggestion nonetheless. I am aware that Marcuse, as a neo-Hegelian (also a neo-Marxist and neo-Freudian), prides himself on his dialectical thinking. But the dialectic—or, as Marcuse likes to say, the negation of the negation—aims to produce not a conjunction of two opposites but a synthesis which is different from either of them. And expressions like "repressive tolerance," "totalitarian democracy," and "democratic dictatorship," because they mismate rather than synthesize opposites, are self-contradictory and therefore meaningless. They should be banished from the literature. It is necessary to say this at the outset because Marcuse has dwelt harshly and at length on the inadequacies, even the Orwellian evils, of ordinary language, yet has also condemned philosophers who employ linguistic analysis in an effort to avoid the pitfalls of meaninglessness. Why, then, does he himself foster rather than transcend obscurity?

I will have occasion to return to this problem. Let me first, however, try to state the essentials of Marcuse's argument. Briefly, for it is a reiteration and extension of his argument in *One-Dimensional Man,* it comes to this: We—and by "we" Marcuse means the peoples of *all* modern industrial societies, whether "democratic" or otherwise—live today in a totalitarian system. It is totalitarian because, with the concentration of economic and political power and the use of technology as an instrument of domination, and under the rule of monopolistic media, "a mentality is created for which right and wrong, true and false are predefined wherever they affect the vital interests of the society." Rational persuasion is thus all but precluded. In such a situation tolerance "is administered to manipulated and indoctrinated individuals who parrot, as their own, the opinion of their masters." It is a tolerance abstractly "pure" but concretely "partisan," for "it actually protects the already established machinery of discrimination." It is thus repressive rather than true tolerance. For tolerance to be real, it must discriminate instead against falsehood and evil; it must cancel the liberal creed of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

free and equal discussion; it must preclude harmful ideas and harmful behavior. It must in fact encourage subversion of the existing order, even if this requires "apparently undemocratic means."

Marcuse articulates these "apparently undemocratic means" as follows:

> They would include the withdrawal of toleration of speech and assembly from groups and movements which promote aggressive policies, armament, chauvinism, discrimination on the grounds of race and religion, or which oppose the extension of public services, social security, medical care, etc. Moreover, the restoration of freedom of thought may necessitate new and rigid restrictions on teachings and practices in the educational institutions which, by their very methods and concepts, serve to enclose the mind within the established universe of discourse and behavior—thereby precluding a priori a rational evaluation of the alternatives.

All this, Marcuse admits, is censorship, "even precensorship," but warranted because the distinction between liberating and repressive teachings and practices "is not a matter of value-preference but of rational criteria"; and these, Marcuse insists, are empirical in nature, turning on the real possibilities of attaining human freedom in a particular stage of civilization. To the question: Who is to draw these distinctions and make these decisions?—the answer (and here Marcuse mistakenly believes he is following Mill) is: Everyone in the maturity of his faculties as a human being, that is, "everyone who has learned to think rationally and autonomously." To be sure, such men will constitute a minority, but since all systems—even "democratic democracies"—are in fact controlled by a few, the only questions are whether they are the correct few and whether they act in the interests of the many, in short, whether they are qualified to exercise Marcuse's "democratic educational dictatorship of free men." Such free men are not to be identified with any social class; they are rather "fighting minorities and isolated groups . . . hopelessly dispersed throughout the society." To liberate these few, and through them the society as a whole, it is necessary "officially" to practice intolerance—both in speech and in action—against movements from the Right and to be tolerant only of movements from the Left. Through such "repressive tolerance" alone, Marcuse concludes, we can hope to realize the objective of "true tolerance."

Of the many things that might be said by way of analysis of or in reply to this argument, I shall limit myself here to three points: (1) Marcuse confuses the meaning of freedom with its conditions and consequences and hence misunderstands tolerance. (2) Marcuse's argument is essentially, though in reverse, the argument of Dostoevsky's Grand

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Inquisitor, of the Right. (3) Marcuse's solution is contradicted and rendered impossible of attainment by his own analysis.

(1) Freedom is not, as Marcuse variously affirms it to be, "self-determination, autonomy" or "a specific historical process." It is rather, as Hobbes properly said, the absence of chains. Since in the real world men who are unrestrained come into collision with one another, societies have always and everywhere confronted—and each in its own way resolved—the problem of determining which liberties are worth protecting, for whom, under what conditions, and to what degree, and, as a necessary consequence, which restraints must be imposed. Freedom then becomes an ordered system of liberties and restraints. Men may differ as to the right order of priorities with respect to such liberties, but some order of priorities there must be. Thus, in democratic states a high value is given to freedom of political opposition; in dictatorships it is not. But to assure and protect this freedom, restraints must be imposed on those men (and practices) who would interfere with it. This is one, though not the only, function of law; but it is not, of course, merely a matter of law, for it involves a complex set of attitudes and appropriate behavior in other realms of social life as well.

Now Marcuse may deplore the particular freedoms granted in a specific society. He may properly object that a formal or legal freedom is in fact negated by informal or social pressures. But freedom as a principle is always a matter of specific liberties and concomitant restraints. It is not self-determination, though a measure of self-determination may be achieved through a particular combination of liberties and restraints. Nor is it a specific historical process, though the specific combination of liberties and restraints may be conditioned by and reflect the values of a particular historical period. Nor, again, is freedom limited to rational and autonomous men. While Mill clearly preferred a society made up of such men, he was realistic enough to recognize that this could not be a necessary condition of freedom. Thus, while he would not apply his principle of liberty to children and immature peoples, i.e., those not capable of improvement by free and equal discussion, he would and did apply it to all mature (not necessarily "autonomous") men, and not simply to Marcuse's elites. Nor, finally, is freedom vindicated only by "good" results, or rightfully "confined by truth." Freedom is in part a value in itself, in part an instrument of individual development, in part a necessary means of social change. That men and societies might make the "wrong" or "false" choices is clearly possible, but this too is an essential aspect of freedom. Otherwise a select group of allegedly wise

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

men will make these choices for them, and this, by whatever name it may be called, is not freedom.

From all of which it follows that tolerance is not the freedom to express only the right ideas, but the freedom to express even stupid or loathsome ideas. The results may improve or depress the lot of men or societies, but the results are distinct from the principle of tolerance itself. And those who argue for tolerance, even absolute tolerance of ideas, do so because they believe that reason and experience are not calculated to lead men to the wrong decisions. Marcuse's rejection of pure tolerance is in these terms either a distrust of reason itself or a belief that the conditions under which reason operates today are such as to vitiate the process of reason, and probably both. But to the extent that it is the second, his attack is properly directed to those conditions and not to the principle of tolerance. Clearly, the "tolerance" he espouses is intolerance, and so it should be called, lest we abandon all semblance of meaning in our ordinary use of terms.

(2) Those who believe not merely that there is an objective truth but that, by some mystery of incarnation, it has been given to them to know it, have rarely been willing to respect the claim to such knowledge by others. For such True Believers, allowing others to disseminate what is believed to be true but what in fact is false, is to make possible the adoption of error. For error, seductively presented, may prevail over truth even in free and equal discussion. How much more likely is it to prevail when the conditions are not free and equal, when those who propound the error (because it gratifies their passions or promotes their conceived interests) also control the sources of information and media of communication, and where the objects of the debate are neither rational nor autonomous but "conditioned" men! In such circumstances to trust to an abstract but spurious toleration is to yield the cause. For truth to prevail, the "right" men must impose it—either by altering the conditions or directing otherwise irrational men, and generally both. In this way men will be governed by truth, and thus, even though forced, they will also be free.

This, it is clear, is the argument of Socrates in the *Republic.* It is the argument of Rousseau in the *Social Contract.* It is the argument of the Grand Inquisitor, both of the Roman Catholic Church and of Stalin's Russia. It is the traditional argument of the Right, of all who would usurp the gates of heaven and in the name of a higher morality insist, as with Gerhart Niemeyer, upon "a firm official stand for what is known as right, true, and good." And it is, in all essentials, the argument of Marcuse. But it is not the argument of John Stuart Mill.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For Mill, as for all democrats committed to the liberal idea of freedom, to believe in Man is not to dispel one's doubts about men. Men are fallible and cannot presume to know the whole truth. Room must therefore be left for the rectification of error and the discovery of additional knowledge. This requires tolerance, the free exploration and articulation of ideas. It may well be that there are deficiencies in the intellectual marketplace, but the remedy is not to mistake Marcuse's authority for truth; it is rather to correct those deficiencies. To substitute one allegedly right authority for another, to compel or manipulate men to do what Marcuse (or anyone else) is convinced it is proper for them to do, is not to force them to be free. It is simply to subject them to Marcuse's (or another's) will. This, by any name, is coercion. It ill accords with the purposes of one who professes to respect humanity.

(3) Finally, and briefly, Marcuse's argument collapses because the reality he portrays renders unattainable, and is in turn contradicted by, the proposals he recommends. If it is true that we live "in a democracy with totalitarian organization" and that this "coordinated society" rests on "firm foundations," how is it humanly possible to change it? Surely not by election, for the "conditioned" masses will simply acquiesce in the opinions of their masters. Surely not by education, for the rulers control both the educators and their media of communication. Surely not by revolution, for who will revolt but "hopelessly dispersed" minorities? It may well be, as Marcuse thinks, that in such a situation the alienated man is the "essential" rather than the sick man, and that rebellious men merit applause rather than condemnation. But such men, however, viewed, cannot overturn a firmly established order. Then to whom, and for what purpose, does Marcuse speak? Is his message really more than a tocsin of futility, a summons to surrender?

If, on the other hand, we are to take seriously his plea for fundamental social and political change, for the establishment of "real" tolerance (or, as he says, "official" intolerance), it can only mean that the society is less than totalitarian, that its foundations are not altogether firm, that there are chinks in the monopolistic concentration of power.

Marcuse cannot have it both ways: either his analysis is correct and his recommendations are unrealizable, or his recommendations are meaningful and appropriate, in which case his analysis cannot stand.

V

It would be less than just to conclude these remarks without noting the deep anguish and high moral commitment that animate all three of our critics. They are disturbed, and properly so, by the injustices

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that disfigure modern societies. They are distressed by the realization that these injustices are maintained by an indifferent, because unseeing, or acquiescent public opinion. Consequently they probe to the roots in an effort to uncover the sources and the interests that mold that opinion. And they have found, as every sensitive observer of human societies has always found, that within our cities there are still two cities—the city of the rich and the city of the poor, with all that this implies in inequalities of power, of access to privileges, and of opportunities. One need not accept everything that A. J. Liebling has written in *The Press,* or that C. Wright Mills has written in *The Power Elite,* to recognize that freedom of speech, for example, has a different meaning for those wealthy enough to buy a newspaper or to purchase time on radio or television, than it has for the masses of individuals who may wish to express their thoughts but have no effective access to the various media of communication. Nor does it require undue imagination to note that men cannot choose what they do not know exists, or will not choose what they have been taught to believe is evil. For these and other reasons, it is less than convincing to argue that the principle of equality accurately characterizes the world of public opinion, or that the free play of ideas does in fact afford people a full range of alternatives.

In underscoring these objectionable features of contemporary life and in urging their correction, our three critics manifest a concern for Man rather than for rich or powerful or prestigious men. Further, in their readiness to foster even revolutionary social and political change in an effort to elevate Man from what he presently is to what he ought to be, to what he *can* be, they identify themselves with an abiding radical tradition. They are legitimately of the Left.

But a wise radicalism seeks to overturn not all things, only unjust and harmful things; and not everything that men have thought and done in the course of human history demands repudiation. There have been achievements, too, and of these not the least noble has been the slow and painful liberation of the human mind. Whatever the merits or demerits of liberalism as a political and economic doctrine, in the realm of the intellect it should command our supreme allegiance: for it has freed reason from the chains of dogma and superstition; it has broken the back of orthodoxy; it has given us a method by which we may continue to correct our errors and improve our understanding. And whatever the merits or demerits of a particular social system in observing, or failing to observe, the principle of liberalism in the intellectual sphere, it is necessary—and I believe that even under circumstances that most humanly approximate the ideal, it will remain necessary—always to dis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tinguish the fact of public opinion, what may be called the will of the people, from the motives and influences that elicit it. Democracies rest on the volume, not on the quality, of that will; and though no one would contend that it is better to have a stupid or misguided will, what distinguishes democratic from nondemocratic governments is that the former rest upon that will even though oligarchic or plutocratic influences may have been powerful in creating it, while the latter reject that will, or at most seek to mold it in support of their policies; it is not, as in democratic states, an initiating and controlling will. To render that will a purer or wiser will is surely a proper concern of democratic (whether liberal or radical) theorists, but this means that they must look not to the removal of that will, or of the process that alone gives it the opportunity to be formed after a consideration of alternatives, but to the correction of those conditions that limit or block the introduction of new and conflicting ideas. In any case, the fact of will and not its purity or disinterestedness remains the foundation of the democratic state.

Those who, therefore, in the name of a social revolution, would destroy not merely the conditions that still constrain reason but the principle of tolerance that alone gives reason its chance to prevail, defy the grim lessons of history. What, then, can one say of those who, like Marcuse, seek to reverse history by substituting for even the imperfect democracies of our day an intellectual and political authoritarianism that would allegedly act *for* the people, on the ground that a government that really acts in the interests of the people is better (and more democratic) than a government *by* the people that may, through ignorance or irrationality, act contrary to those best interests? Such men are neither radical nor liberal but, let us use the cruel word, reactionary. This is why, despite all the legitimate criticisms that might be (and in the course of the past century have been) made of Mill's philosophy, or of his political and economic teachings, or even of the subsidiary doctrines and incidental observations in his essay *On Liberty,* the central argument of that essay remains fundamentally unimpaired.

Not Mill's theory of pure tolerance but the repressive intolerance of our critics is, then, to be condemned.

(Note. The three writers criticized in this article have been invited by DISSENT to reply to Mr. Spitz. As we go to press, Messrs. Marcuse and Wolff have indicated their intention of doing so. This discussion will therefore be resumed in a future issue.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

H. L. Nieburg

THE CONTRACT STATE

Government in the Economy

Government has become the economy's largest buyer and consumer. The government contract, improvised, *ad hoc,* and largely unexamined, has become an increasingly important device for intervention in public affairs, not only to procure goods and services but also to achieve a variety of explicit or inadvertent policy-ends. The government contract allocates national resources, organizes human efforts, stimulates economic activity, and distributes status and power. The government contract has risen to its present prominence as a social management tool since World War II, achieving in two decades a scope and magnitude which now rivals simple subsidies, tariffs, taxes, direct regulation, and positive action programs in impact upon the nature and quality of American life. Yet there is precious little consciousness of the trend; political leaders tend to see each contract as an isolated procurement action, overlooking the general pattern. Just as federal grants-in-aid to state and local governments have (since 1933) become a principal means for national integration of divided local jurisdictions, so federal contracting with private corporations is creating a new kind of economic federalism.

The implications of grants-in-aid have acquired some clarity: state taxation still takes care of traditional functions, while new and greatly expanded activities devolve upon local bodies through national decision-making, and the states operate more and more as administrative districts for centrally-established policies. On the other hand, the implications of economic federalism based upon contracts are far from clear. To some degree, the forms and effects of contracting evade debate through by-passing the age-old conflict between private and public interests. Mobilized to serve national policy, private contractors interpenetrate government at all levels, exploiting the public consensus of defense, space, and science to augment and perpetuate their own power, inevitably confusing their own special interests with those of the nation.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Explicit authority for the U.S. government to conduct its business by contract is not found in the constitution, but has historically been accepted as a means of achieving constitutional objectives. There is ample precedent, for instance, in the use of railroads for movement of troops, or in General McClellan's arrangements with the Pinkerton Detective Agency for espionage against the Southern Confederacy.

What is new is the persistence and growth of government-industry contract relationships under which, in the words of David E. Bell (then director of the Budget Bureau), "numbers of the nation's most important business corporations do the bulk of their work with the government." The Martin Company, for example, does 99 percent of its business with the government. Bell asked: "Well, is it a private agency or is it a public agency?" Organized as a private corporation and "philosophically . . . part of the private sector," yet "it obviously has a different relationship to governmental decisions and the government's budget . . . than was the case when General Motors or U.S. Steel sold perhaps 2 or 5 percent of their annual output to government bodies."[1] Traditionally, the government had never become the dominant customer for any private firm except in times of war. The Contract State of the postwar world must be viewed as a drastic innovation full of unfamiliar portents.

Grandiose claims are heard on all sides for the "unique contribution" that the contract mechanism has made in preserving "the free enterprise system." Atomic energy has been cited as an example of the new collaboration: "Without contracts, it would be government-owned and operated. With contracts, one person in 16 in the industry works for government; the other 15 work for contractors."[2] An aerospace journal cites space technology as "the fastest moving, typically free-enterprise and democratic industry yet created," achieving these values "not on salesmanship" (that is, on traditional quality/cost competitiveness) but "on what is needed most—intellectual production, the research payoff."[3] Lyndon B. Johnson, while Vice-President, argued: "If we want to maintain credibility of our claim to the superiority of a free political system—and a free private enterprise system—we cannot seriously entertain the thought of precipitating now so massive a disillusionment as would follow a political default on our commitments in space exploration."[4]

The government contract has provided means by which new tasks deemed essential could be performed without direct additions to the size of federal government, thus preserving the alleged rights of private property and profit. Consequently, a system now prevails neither "free"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nor "competitive," in which the market mechanism of supply/demand has been abolished for key sectors of the economy, its place taken by government policy-making and political influence. Instead of free enterprise, we are moving toward a government-subsidized private-profit system.

Key to the Kingdom

Unlike older government-fostered industries, the new contractor empire operates without the yardsticks of adequate government in-house capability or a civilian market. Research and development has become the crux of the system. As described in the 1962 Bell Report: The companies involved "have the strongest incentives to seek contracts for research and development work which will give them both the know-how and the preferred position to seek later follow-on production contracts."[5] Favored corporations that win R&D work thereafter exploit a number of special advantages: They may achieve sole-source or prime contractor status, which eliminates competition and dilutes all cost and performance evaluation. The open-end, cost-plus nature of the contract instrument, the lack of product specifications, official tolerance of spending overruns, all increase the total contract and fee, rewarding wasteful practices and unnecessary technical complication, permitting violation of all rules of responsible control, and making possible multiple tiers of hidden profits. The systems management or prime contractor role enables favored companies to become powerful industrial brokers using unlimited taxpayer funds and contract awards to strengthen their corporate position, cartelize the contract market, and exert great political influence.

In less than a decade the area surrounding Washington, D.C. has become one of the nation's major R&D concentrations. Every large corporation has found it necessary to establish field offices in proximity to NASA, the Pentagon, and Capitol Hill. The Washington area now ranks first in the nation for "scientific personnel" (per 1000 population), although the major product is company promotion and politics rather than science.

The gross figures provide an index of the economic impact: the 1966 federal budget called for $23.7 billion in new obligational authority for defense and space—$11.4 billion for Defense Department procurement of hardware and control systems, $6.7 billion for R&D; $5.26 billion for NASA (virtually all R&D), and an additional $272 million for space-related R&D conducted by the Weather Bureau, the National Science Foundation, and the Atomic Energy Commission. Over 90 percent of this flows to the highly-concentrated aerospace industry.[6] Another $3.3 billion was budgeted for other kinds of R&D, making a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

total of $27 billion. Space, defense and R&D together now comprise the nation's single most substantial allocation of funds, towering over all other programs. In the mid-1960's, government R&D (excluding related procurement) stabilized between 2 and 3 percent of the GNP. Cumulative missile/space spending in the decade which began in 1955 amounted to over $100 billion, and during the balance of the 60's we will spend at least an additional $125 billion.[7] Virtually every department and agency of the federal government is involved to some extent in R&D contracting although the Defense Department and NASA account for more than 96 percent.

The first result of this staggering outpour has been the artificial inflation of R&D costs, enabling contractors to hire away the government's own in-house personnel. Officials in the lower reaches of the government bureaucracy (both civilian and military), charged with administration of contracts, find themselves dealing with private corporate officials who often were their former bosses and continue as companions of present bosses and congressional leaders who watchdog the agencies. A contract negotiator or supervisor must deal with men who can determine his career prospects; who may cause him to be passed over or transferred to a minor position in some remote bureaucratic corner, sometimes with a ceremonial drumming before a congressional committee.

The military cutbacks that characterized the Eisenhower years were accompanied by expanding military budgets, a paradox explained by the systematic substitution of private contractors to carry out historical in-house activities. This trend was heralded as a move back to "free enterprise." Government installations and factories built in World War II were sold to industry, usually at a fraction of the taxpayers' investment. Others were leased at low fees to contractors who were then given government business to make use of these facilities profitable. In some instances government built new facilities which it leased at nominal fees. Such facilities were permitted to be used, without cost, for commercial production as well.

The Cadres of private contractors were mobilized in the 50's for the unprecedented growth of the Air Force. As an offspring of the Army, the new branch lacked the substantial in-house management, engineering, and R&D capability that the Army had built into its arsenal system. In order to compete for jurisdiction over new weapons systems, the Air Force turned to private contractors. In its rapid climb during the 50's, the Air Force fostered a growing band of private companies which took over a substantial part of regular military operations, in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cluding maintaining aircraft, firing rockets, building and maintaining launching sites, organizing and directing other contractors, and making major public decisions. In the area of missilry, junior officers and enlisted men were reduced to liaison agents or mere custodians.

The contracting system had several bonus effects, enabling the Air Force to keep its military personnel levels down while building an enormous industrial and Congressional constituency with a stake in maintaining large-scale funding of new weapons systems. The Air Force's success over her sister services during the Eisenhower years established the magic formula that all federal agencies soon imitated, setting in motion a rush to contract-out practically everything that was not nailed down and, in the process, decimating the government's in-house management, engineering, and R&D capability, inflating the costs of R&D, and reducing the scientific and engineering resources available to the civilian economy and to universities.

The Army learned an important lesson in its struggle with the Air Force during the Thor-Jupiter controversy—that its extensive in-house engineering-management capability was a positive *disadvantage* in mobilizing Congressional and public influence to support military missions and budgets. Private industry had provided the Air Force with a potent weapon in Congress for outflanking the Army during all the years of strategic debate over missile development and the role of infantry forces in a nuclear world. Air Force lobbying during the 1950's contributed importantly to American over-dependence on nuclear weaponry and the doctrine of massive retaliation, while the complete range of sub-nuclear military capabilities was allowed to wither. This lesson was inscribed on the Army-Navy skin by the budget-paring knife of the Eisenhower Administration and led to gradual weakening of the arsenal system.

The old research triad—government, industry, university—has virtually disappeared. In its place is a whole spectrum of new arrangements, such as the so-called "systems-engineering and technical direction" firms operated on a profit or non-profit basis (for example, G.E. is employed by NASA to integrate and test all launch facilities and space vehicles, while Bellcomm, a subsidiary of A.T.&T., is employed for engineering and management of all NASA operations; Aerospace Corporation plays a similar role for the Air Force). Still in the picture are major corporations, universities drawing a majority of their research budgets from government, non-profit institutions conducting pad-and-pencil studies of strategic and policy matters for government agencies, and government laboratories operated by industry or by uni-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

versities. Knitting the complex together is an elite group of several thousand men, predominantly industrial managers and brokers, who play a variety of interlocking roles—sitting on boards of directors, consulting for government agencies, serving on advisory committees, acting as managers on behalf of government in distributing and supervising subcontracts, moving between private corporations and temporary tours-of-duty in government. Private corporations have contracts to act as systems-engineers and technical directors for multi-billion dollar R&D and production activities involving hundreds of other corporations.

Instead of fighting "creeping socialism," private industry, on an enormous scale, has become the agent of a fundamentally new economic system which resembles both traditional private enterprise and the corporate state of fascism. A mere handful of giants (such as North American Aviation, Lockheed, General Dynamics, and Thompson-Ramo-Wooldridge) hold prime contracts over more than half the total R&D and production business. In dealing with their subcontractors and suppliers, these corporations act in the role of government:

> These companies establish procurement organizations and methods which proximate those of the government. Thus large prime contractors will invite design competition, establish source selection bids, send out industrial survey teams, make subcontract awards on a competitive or a negotiated basis, appoint small business administrators, designate plant resident representatives, develop reporting systems to spot bottlenecks, make cost analyses of subcontractor operations, and request monthly progress and cost reports from subcontractors.[8]

The giant contractors have the authority to decide whether or not to conduct an activity themselves or to contract it out. They may use their power over a subcontractor to acquire his proprietary information and force him to sell them his company. They have the power to make or break geographical areas and individual bankers, investors, and businessman. They may themselves create "independent" subcontractors in order to conceal profits, to keep certain proprietary information from the government, or for other purposes. Generally, they can and do use their decision-making power to stabilize their own operations, protecting their economic strength at the expense of smaller and weaker companies, and competing with other giant corporations by constant mergers, acquisitions, and investments among the flock of companies dependent upon them for government largess.

The same 300 companies which perform 97 percent of all federal R&D also perform 91 percent of all private R&D. Most of the private

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

R&D is a means of maintaining the inside track for new awards in anticipated areas of government need. Since these same companies do all or most of their business with government, the so-called "private" R&D is paid for by the government in the form of overhead on other contracts.[9] For example, the United States is still paying for Douglas Aircraft's investment in developing the DC-3 thirty years ago. A congressional committee noted the trend:

> At the moment a small number of giant firms in a few defense and space-related areas, with their facilities located principally in three states, and engaged almost exclusively in the application of existing engineering and physical knowledge to the creation of new products and processes, receive the overwhelming preponderance of the government's multibillion dollar research awards. . . . Clearly, if the resulting technical discoveries are permitted to remain within these narrow confines rather than be disseminated widely through the society, a disproportionate amount of the benefits will be channeled into the hands of the few and further economic concentration will take place.[10]

Government itself continues to enhance the power of the prime contractors by accentuating the trend toward fewer and bigger contracts. The House Select Committee on Small Business reported that while defense procurement increased by $1.1 billion in 1963, small business awards declined by $268 million. NASA doubled its prime procurements while the small business share dropped from 11.7 to 8.5 percent. The Congressional Joint Economic Committee reported that 100 companies and their subsidiaries accounted for 73.4 percent of total federal procurement value in 1964. Meanwhile, the number of companies receiving annual awards of more than $1 billion has been steadily narrowing. Six companies belonged to that exclusive club at the beginning of 1964: Boeing, $2.3 billion; North American Aviation, $1.9 billion; Lockheed, $1.4 billion; McDonnell Aircraft, $1.4 billion; General Dynamics, $1.1 billion; and General Electric, $1.03 billion. North American alone, whose vending machine business made Bobby Baker a millionaire, held 28 percent of all NASA procurements.

Erosion of Public Control

The dominant centers of corporate power have largely usurped the government's evaluation and technical direction responsibilities. Frank Gibney, one of the early consultants to the House Space Committee, observed that "the spectacle of a private profit-making company rendering national decisions makes the old Dixon-Yates concept look as harmless as a Ford Foundation Research Project."[11]

There is no doubt that the flow of billions of federal dollars into

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

narrow areas of the economy tends to create a self-perpetuating coalition of vested interests. With vast public funds at stake, industries, geographical regions, labor unions, and a multitude of supporting enterprises band together to maintain and expand their share. Pork-barrel politics and alignments with federal agencies and political leaders provide a powerful political machine to keep the contract flow forthcoming.

The pattern is already in the process of filtering down to state and local governments. In the name of preserving and utilizing the "unique" systems-engineering and management capability that NASA publicists claim as one of the space program's major benefits to the civilian economy, underemployed aerospace industrial teams are now pushing for contracts in such areas as urban traffic management and water conservation. Governor Pat Brown of California has led the way. The only way to approach such problems, he declared recently, is from the systems management viewpoint. The state has already retained Aerojet-General for preliminary studies. An aerospace trade magazine commented: "The Governor's effort to put aerospace talents to work on these problems is an imaginative one. Other states and the federal government are watching the experiment with interest."[12]

If the method of work follows the federal pattern, Aerojet-General will win a state contract by hiring some civil engineers (including some from the state agencies already responsible for such projects) to write a persuasive proposal. Once the contract is awarded, the corporation will hire the necessary technicians from the state government, the universities, and other on-going operations, paying them greatly augmented salaries for work they were already doing under the traditional arrangements.

The first product will be an integrated state plan with engineering details, specifications, and cost estimates (always optimistically low at this stage). The company will then move for a prime contract to conduct the work, hoping to perform some of it itself and to subcontract the rest to local builders and architects who have gained relevant experience through work they were already doing for the state on a piecemeal basis. The contractor will cut across the cleavages of state, county, and municipal jurisdiction, insuring everyone a reasonable return, while retaining for itself two tiers of profit: one from its own work, the other added to that of the subcontractors. In time the systems teams, having emasculated state and local technical resources, will by judicious use of contract money build a political machine in the state legislature—relegating to their own managerial cadre (and to the investment brokers who control their corporate paper) a large share of the decision-making authority of the State of California.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Later, as the contract arrangements acquire stability, Aerojet-General may begin a process of mergers and acquisitions among its subcontractors. The result will be a new concentration of economic power which will increase the corporation's sole-source status in its areas of activity. Like the conventional political party, the corporation will have acquired the ability to allocate state resources, to dispense job and financial patronage, and to insure profits for its investors from the tax resources of state government.

Aerojet-General completed its preliminary waste disposal study in late 1965, recommending a ten-year program to be conducted by systems management techniques and to cost multi-billion dollars.

The California experiment may achieve the positive goal of building or imposing a consensus for state-wide planning and technical, rather than political, logic in solving large-scale problems. The traditional political parties have so far failed to achieve this goal. Yet one must ask if social consensus and rational planning cannot be achieved without the abdication of traditional political and governmental processes?

Perhaps the slow progress of traditional politics is preferable to a system which evades democratic controls and may eventually spread its grip into all areas of public policy. Is there no way to build consensus for regional planning under the aegis of ordinary political leadership and civil service systems? Essentially the same questions may be directed at the full-blown Contract State nurtured by the federal government. Adherence of the R&D contract cult to the shibboleths of free enterprise may serve to conceal the fact that a kind of backhanded government planning, in which it participates and from which it benefits, has come to replace free enterprise. In spite of such temporary stimulants as tax-cutting and the multiplier effect of missile-space spending, the American civilian economy is faltering in its growth. The aerospace industries, on the other hand, ride high on unprecedented profits and diversify their holdings, biting deep into the most succulent portions of the civilian production machine.

The politics of corporate finance have accelerated concentration not only in the government contract market but also in the civilian market, both of which are now thoroughly interpenetrated and interlocked. Among the top 100 prime aerospace contractors are such household names as General Electric, General Motors, A.T.&T., Westinghouse, Chrysler, Ford, Socony-Mobil, Firestone, Philco, and Goodyear. Many of the aerospace companies are mere facades and legal fictions having no individual existence but representing entities of financial and/or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

political convenience. In a 1965 House Judiciary Committee report, the five largest aerospace firms were cited as flagrant examples of corporate interlock. Douglas has 15 directors interlocked with managements of 17 banks and other financial institutions, one insurance company and 28 industrial-commercial corporations (including Cohu Electronics, Giannini Controls, and the Richfield and Tidewater Oil Companies). Not uncommon is the pattern by which each company holds stock in its nominal competitors (for example, McDonnell Aircraft holds a large block in the Douglas Company "as an investment"). A study of 74 major industrial, commercial and financial companies found that 1,480 officers and directors held a total of 4,428 positions. The Antitrust Subcommittee staff concluded that management interlocks today are as prevalent as they were in 1914 when the Clayton Act prohibited interlocking directorships.

Points of No Return

The quasi-governmental mercantilist corporations, which maintained monopoly power through royal franchises, were anathema to the classical liberals. Thomas Hobbes compared them to "worms in the entrails of man," and Madison in the *Federalist Papers* dealt at length with the problems of limiting their growth. At the end of the nineteenth century, Henry Adams emphasized the origin of the corporation as an agency of the state, "created for the purpose of enabling the public to realize some social or national end without involving the necessity for direct governmental administration."

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the corporation proved a powerful vehicle for mobilizing and organizing resources to achieve rapid economic growth made possible by burgeoning technology. Its very success, the efficiencies of bigness, and the inevitable politics of corporate empire-building, thrust into American skies the spires of monopoly power. Since that time sectional and economic interests have shifted and changed, the social and technological landscape has vastly altered, and government has emerged as guarantor of social interests against the claims of private power. Government contracting on its present scale has created a new problem. Business and industry have always been close to the centers of political power, but never before in peacetime have they become a virtual fourth branch of government, enjoying a position created by the permanent crisis of international diplomacy. Loyal to the new consensus, government has accepted the responsibility to maintain the financial status of its private contractors as essential to U.S. defense and economic health. Cost-competitive-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ness, the traditional safeguard against corporate power and mis-allocation of national resources, has been suspended by R&D contract practices.

NASA and the Pentagon use their contracting authority to broaden the productive base in one area, maintain it in another, authorize capability here or there for different kinds of R&D, create competition or limit it. Under existing laws they may make special provisions for small business and depressed areas and maintain contracts for services not immediately required in order to preserve industrial skills or reserve capacity for emergency needs. All of this represents national planning. But without recognition of planning as a legitimate government responsibility, planning authority is fragmented, scattered among federal agencies and Congress, with the makeshift planning that results serving the interests of the most powerful political alignments. In place of forward planning responsible to the broad national community, the nation drifts sideways, denying the legitimacy of planning, yet backhandedly planning in behalf of narrow special interests whose corridors of power are closed to public control.

The result is severe distortion in the allocation of resources to national needs. For almost three decades, national resources have been commanded by political and economic power behind defense priorities. What was initially sustained by emergency comes to be sustained, normalized, and institutionalized (as emergency wanes) through a cabal of vested interests. The failure on the part of these interests to redirect their magnificent machine toward a broader range of values denies the nation what may be the ultimate basis of diplomatic strength and the only means to maintain the impetus of a mature economy—namely, the fullest enjoyment by all of our people of the immense bounty almost within our grasp.

The shibboleths of free enterprise perpetuate a system through which, one by one, the fruits of the civilian economy fall into the outstretched hands of the aerospace group. The so-called "Great Consensus" assembled by President Johnson is based on the paradox of support from great corporate giants as well as from labor and the liberals. The systematic neglect of the civilian economy has led a great number of small businessmen, managers, white collar workers, and professionals to embrace the simple formulas of Goldwater conservatism which directs the anxieties generated by incipient stagnation against the targets of autocratic organized labor and government spending for welfare and foreign aid. The exploitation of the myths of free enterprise have deflected attention from the feudal baronies of economic power and the tendency of the Administration to attack the symptoms of a growing inequality of wealth without disturbing its sources.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The problem of bringing the Contract State under democratic control is but a new phase of a continuing challenge in Western industrial societies. The legal fiction that holds economic and political institutions to be separate and distinct becomes ever less applicable as economic pluralism is swallowed up by corporate giantism. The myths of economic freedom tend to insulate the giants from social control, protecting their private government status and threatening the political freedom of the majority. The tension between private and public decision-making is a self-correcting process when its dimensions are visible and understood and when public authority is not wholly captive to the pressures of narrow interest groups. The process is delicately balanced, and there are points of no return.

---

1. U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Government Operations, Subcommittee, *Hearings, Systems Development and Management,* Part I. 87th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington: USGPO, 1962), pp. 51–2.
2. James McCamy, *Science and Public Administration* (Birmingham, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1960), pp. 58–9.
3. *Industrial Research,* December 1959, pp. 8–9. Cited in U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Science and Astronautics, Staff Study, *The Practical Values of Space Exploration.* 87th Cong., 1st Sess. (Washington: USGPO, 1961), p. 74.
4. U.S., NASA, *Astronautics and Aeronautics, 1963. Chronology on Science Technology and Policy.* NASA Historical Staff Office of Policy Planning. (Washington: NASA Scientific and Technical Information Division, 1964), p. 400.
5. Bell Report, printed in Appendix I, *Systems Development and Management, Part I,* p. 205.
6. U.S., Congress, House, Select Committee on Government Research, *Report, Impact of Federal Research and Development Programs, Study No. VI.* 88th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington: USGPO, 1964), p. 55.
7. See *Aerospace Facts and Figures 1962* (Washington: Aerospace Industries Association of America, 1963), p. 20; *U.S. Aeronautics and Space Activities 1962,* Bureau of the Budget, cited in *Missiles and Rockets,* January 21, 1963, p. 12; see *Aviation Week,* January 21, 1963, p. 30; also U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Aeronautical and Space Sciences, *Hearings, NASA Authorization for Fiscal Year 1965, Part I.* S. 2446. 88th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington: USGPO, 1964), p. 56.
8. U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Government Operations, *Eleventh Report, Organization and Management of Missile Programs,* H. R. No. 1121, Union Calendar No. 483. 86th Cong., 1st Sess. (Washington: USGPO, 1959), p. 49.
9. See Carl E. Barnes, "Industrial Research, Is it Outmoded?" *Business Horizons,* Summer 1964.
10. U.S., Congress, House, Select Committee on Government Research, *Report, Contract Policies and Procedures for Research and Development, Study VII,* H.R. No. 1942, Union Calendar No. 835, H. Res. 504 as amended by H. Res. 810, 88th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington: USGPO, 1964), p. 58.
11. *Harper's,* January 1960, p. 43.
12. Coughlin, *Missiles and Rockets,* August 2, 1965, p. 46. Governor Brown's statements are cited here as well.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTEBOOK

Herbert J. Gans

The White Problem

As demographers had predicted ever since the 1960's, many American cities are now predominantly negro, and have elected negro mayors and city councils. This has generated widespread unrest among the minority White population, and as a result, the worried mayor of a large Eastern city recently called a conference of negro social scientists and White race leaders to discuss the White problem.

The conference was opened by a prominent educator who diagnosed the White problem in three ways. First, he demonstrated that the minority population has traditionally suffered from "muscular deprivation," which he traced to the failure of the White family to teach physical fitness to its children, making them unable to learn once they entered school. Or, as a flippant delegate later put it, "Mr. Charley just doesn't have a natural sense of rhythm."

Second, the educator pointed to "cognitive deterioration," a speech defect that had developed in 19th century universities and was being perpetuated by outmoded grammar texts used in minority public schools. This speech defect prevented children from talking in accepted 20th century ways, and created problems when they applied for jobs. Nor could the White youngsters hold jobs, he went on, because of their cultural predisposition to "careerism," a type of occupational motivation that encouraged them to prepare for only one kind of work, making them unemployable in a rapidly changing economy.

The next speaker, a social worker, talked about the "independency pattern," the Whites' inability to depend on others, and their need to do everything by themselves. As a result, they could not be reached by public welfare and case work techniques, would not accept job retraining, muscular enrichment or aspirational counseling, and ultimately regressed into a state of despair he called ragged individualism.

Both analyses of the White problem were questioned by the luncheon speaker, a psychiatrist, who pointed out that in our leisure society, the emphasis on jobs and job training was misplaced. The real problem was the minority population's reluctance to relax and enjoy itself, which he traced to "deferred gratification," the tendency to put off having fun; and "reality obsession," the failure to escape which produced anxiety and even mental illness. As a result, Whites had become seriously addicted to nic-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

otine, which was now leading to high rates of lung cancer, heart disease and other forms of self-destruction.

These consequences were a natural outcome, he argued, of the centuries-long subjection to Puritanism, which forced men and women to spend all their time either at work or at church, and denied them the normal human the past, but felt recent White diffi-tal health.

He was followed on the podium by a minister, who agreed that Puritanism had done considerable damage in the past, but felt recent White difficulties should be ascribed to "moral confusion," brought about by the illness and death of God. When the minority population was still a majority, it had committed immoral acts which it considered moral, among them waging war, cheating in school, and defending monogamy while taking lovers or subscribing to Playboy. He called for the resurrection of the deity and the introduction of moral education courses in schools for the racially disadvantaged.

The afternoon session was given over to the White race leaders, who argued that the minority problem was fundamentally economic and political. There was neither enough work nor leisure to go around, and until the federal government stepped in to provide both, the retraining, enrichment and counseling schemes could only increase White despair. Moreover, they insisted, the Whites were suffering from powerlessness; being outvoted at the polls, they were subject to police brutality and to more subtle indignities from the very legal, educational and welfare agencies that were set up to help them. The negro population, one speaker suggested, had in the past suffered from similar degradations, but had overcome them by protests, demonstrations and riots, while the Whites, who valued order above all, could not use these methods. He argued for government programs to train the minority population in civil disobedience. A young radical who had tried to organize in minority neighborhoods supported this proposal, but added that the Whites' apathy also resulted from having too much money, and proposed a revival of the positive income tax.

The conference received so much favorable publicity that other cities held similar meetings, and one mayor commissioned a well-known negro sociologist to write the now famous Patterson paper. Patterson located the problem in two characteristics of the White family. One he called "mate-fixation," the preference for living with one spouse, which he thought harmful because children growing up with a single set of parents could not cope with the diversity of modern life. The other he ascribed to patriarchy, and the mother's resulting inability to serve as a proper model for her daughters. Hung up on their fathers, many girls could not marry, others were driven to adultery with older men, and some even resorted to incest. While these difficulties stemmed initially from the male's position during Puritanism, they were currently exacerbated by suburban renewal, which was forcing White families, though untrained for urban life, to move back to the city.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The report was debated bitterly; the White race leadership arguing that Patterson's portrayal of White family difficulties was insulting, and negro social scientists charging that his findings had been old-hat for a generation. Patterson fought back, upsetting the White leaders by backing their own proposals for government action, and pointing out that city hall was not given to reading sociological texts.

This set off another round of arguments, and nothing has yet been done about the White problem, producing a loud sigh of relief among urban politicians, who are thus spared from taking action that could only lose them votes among the majority population.

Alex Garber

A Call to End the Draft*

When the American Civil Liberties Union affirms that "compulsory military service, whether in time of peace or war, is *always* a severe deprivation of civil liberties," neither the liberals of the Left nor democratic socialists take sufficient heed. We tend instead to be more alerted to other, but less commanding issues like the need to extend draft exemption to a broader category of objectors or to cleanse academia of its new-found guilt over Grades for Death. In our impulsive response to the class and racial inequities of Selective Service, which shamefully concentrates America's underprivileged youth in the front lines, we find sudden support from Secretary of Defense McNamara. The whole system of military conscription, however, has been peripherally examined, if at all. Similarly slighted has been the relevance of peacetime conscript armies to adventurism in foreign policy.

Conscription, no matter how genuinely universalized, is inimical to both democratic and socialist values. That the *levée en masse* provided a successful defense of the French revolution in no way endows conscription with a democratic character. The principle of a nation in arms was most completely expressed in the Prussian system of universal liability from which it soon spread throughout continental Europe. On strictly military grounds the system was ideal. In time of peace large numbers of able-bodied men were given intensive, efficient military training. In case of war a rapid mo-

*This is a continuation of the reflections on the draft which appeared in both our May–June and July–August issues. Please note also the letter by John R. Seeley on this topic, on p. 554.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bilization was possible. But the mere existence of armies based on conscription demonstrated what Auguste Comte called "the anti-military inclinations of modern populations."

Values of freedom and equality, cherished in civilian life, are obviously denied in military organizations. That denial creates a distaste for the military, as illustrated in *The American Soldier*,[1] a circumspect World War II investigation of army personnel. Not only did the G.I. feel coerced within an "authoritarian organization demanding rigid obedience," but he also deplored and resisted this "highly stratified social system, in which hierarchies of deference were formally and minutely established by official regulation, subject to penalties for infraction, on or off duty."

Military organization is not just another bureaucracy. What distinguishes the soldier from the civilian is that the soldier lives with the expectation to kill and the demand that he suffer the risk of death by violence. Justified on the grounds of community preservation, death-dealing and death-receiving transforms military life into a serious matter, a seriousness antiseptically avoided by the effort to equate it with years in the Peace Corps or the antipoverty service.

Political theorists have generally agreed that a large standing army is both an inducement to militarism and a menace to democratic government. Peacetime conscription potentially heightens nationalist and military sentiments. When a citizenry is systematically trained to military ideals, those tend to become rooted in the nation.

In the U.S. today, where public opinion in foreign affairs has been deliberately muffled, foreign policy decisions remain the exclusive property of hidden cabals in the State Department, the Pentagon and the C.I.A. Theodore Draper drives this point home in his meticulous analysis of "The Dominican Crisis" in the December 1965 issue of *Commentary*. As long as such cabals can count on the rapid dispatching of 23,000 soldiers to Santo Domingo, foreign policy can easily slide into military adventures. The effort to bring foreign policy into the public domain, where domestic policy questions have long been contested, will surely entail debate over military conscription.

Considered the main alternative to conscription, a voluntary recruitment system obtains what is called a professional army. But the essence of military professionalism lies in the training, command and decision-making in both types of armies which come under the complete control of a permanent officer caste. To deny that a conscript army poses a threat to civil government ignores the importance of its officer corps. To invoke images of the U.S. either in terms of a "Garrison State" or a "Power Elite" based on a military-industrial complex, accentuates the significance of the officer caste. But it is patently contradictory to uphold both propositions simultaneously.

The ghosts of both Caesar's Legions and Cromwell's Model Army are said to have stalked the American constitutional convention. It was this fear that prompted so thorough-going a constitutional subordination of the military to civilian authority. A large national army was discouraged by pro-

[1] S. A. Stauffer, *et al.*, *The American Soldier*, vols. 1 and 2, Princeton, 1949.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

visions for state militias; the armed forces of the nation came under a *civilian* commander-in-chief; and the support of those forces was allotted only to Congress, whose military appropriations were limited to two years. Thereafter, up to 1940, U.S. peacetime military operations depended exclusively on a system of voluntary recruitment. In spite of this long history of professionalism, Caesarism never materialized.

Since 1940, however, conscription has been in force almost continually. To be sure, the present Universal Military Training and Service Act is subject to quadri-annual Congressional review. But until recent months conscription aroused little concern; it was renewed in 1963 with only ten minutes of Senate deliberation. Senator Nelson was one of the few defenders of the uneducated and the poor who are extra-heavily burdened with the draft, when he denounced Selective Service as "a colossal mistake." A subsequent investigation uncovered 5,000 married soldiers applying for family relief assistance, and 70,000 men-in-arms moonlighting. Nonetheless, at the present time the conscript receives $89.90 per month, less than one-third the salary of a second lieutenant. By contrast the Canadian private gets $112.00, and those with skills, $202.00. Through the conscript the U.S. is thus able to minimize its military manpower costs while maximizing the number of military personnel.

Before a "clear and present danger," universal military training can be justified, just as overriding needs of national security may warrant censorship in times of war. But it is the conscription advocate who carries the burden of justification. If in open debate before the public and Congress, he can confirm the threat to national security, an abridgement of liberties is warranted. This constitutes no abandonment of the civil libertarian approach which permits limitation of liberties in the face of greater dangers. Neither is this basis of justification subject to arbitrary judgment or the ambiguities of an abstract non-historcial context. When confronted with the Nazi conquest of continental Western Europe in 1940, the A.C.L.U. acknowledged the superior claim of national security and withheld its opposition to compulsory military training.

Because of our callous acceptance of permanent conscription, it is important to review the way in which the development of World War II was translated into specifications of the "clear and present danger." The Selective Service and Training Act of 1940 limited training to twelve months. It restricted the number of inductees to the amount Congressional appropriation provided, confined training to 900,000 at any given time and specified a terminal date to the system of conscription itself. After the initial collapse of the Soviet armies, the Service Extension Act of 1941 declared the national interest impaired and authorized training for as much as eighteen months. But service under this act was still confined to the Western hemisphere and U.S. territories. Following Pearl Harbor, these restrictions were removed by the declaration of war, and the length of service was extended for the duration plus six months.

Yet conscription was applied to manpower alone, despite repeated pro-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

posals to "draft capital" too. Consequently the risks of war fell only upon the armed forces, who suffered over a million casualties, while the proliferation of wartime millionaires grew at a pace unsurpassed in U.S. history. Had wealth also been conscripted in the name of national defense, the justification for compulsory service might have been more discriminately established.

To those for whom the undeclared war in Vietnam and the present system of conscription are understandably repugnant, another course is open, besides seeking individually to opt out of the army by way of "conscience," or by embarking on frustrated expressions of rebellion. The alternative involves organizing an anti-militarist movement with the aims of abolishing a conscripted standing army and establishing a democratic foreign policy. Such a movement would express popular opposition to compulsory soldiering except under conditions of dire emergency. No such condition prevails in the Vietnam War.

The growth of conscript armies contributes as much to the arms race as does the stock-piling of weapons. A bona fide antimilitarist movement will therefore press for abolishing conscription throughout the world, exposing the size of the Soviet armed services and their military expenditures as well as the Pentagon's. Particularly repulsive is Castro's willingness to permit emigration to all dissidents except those between 17 and 27 who are eligible for Cuban conscription. Along with its demands for steps toward disarmament, an antimilitarist movement will urge the reduction of all standing armies. Before the youth of the world, nothing is more urgent than to replace the call to arms with a call to end the draft.

CURRENT LID PAMPHLETS

The Politics of Poverty, Michael Harrington .... 30¢

The Urban School Crisis, P. Sexton, P. Goodman, Christopher Jencks, and others ..... 75¢

Automation and the Future Society, Ben Seligman (on press)

"Looking Forward" Papers

The Watts "Manifesto" and The McCone Report, Bayard Rustin ..... 25¢

On Communism and the Relations with Communists, Irving Howe ..... 25¢

LEAGUE FOR INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY
112 East 19 Street, New York, N.Y. 10003
Enclosed please find $..... for the following pamphlets:

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

Lewis Coser

Major Work on a Major Figure

ROSA LUXEMBURG, by J. P. Nettl. Two volumes. London and New York: Oxford University Press. 984 pp. $20.20.

By the standards of vulgar Hegelians, such as E. H. Carr, this book should never have been written. Hegelians are concerned with the history of those movements and persons that have been historically successful and in tune with the *Zeitgeist*. Rosa Luxemburg's political life (1871-1919) is the record of a magnificent quixotic failure. Luckily not all British historians, even on the Left, share Carr's worship of the bitch-Goddess success, and so we owe to J. P. Nettl a monumental biography of the great revolutionary socialist.

Though Rosa Luxemburg's name has loomed large in the historical imagination of the socialist movement ever since her brutal assassination by counterrevolutionary soldiers after the Berlin Spartakist rising in January 1919, no satisfactory biography has been available up till now. Mr. Nettl's painstaking work fills a gap. Of previous work, only the biography of my friend, the late Paul Froelich (*Rosa Luxemburg, Her Life and Work,* London, 1940) merits serious attention. But Froelich had no access to the archival materials in Poland, Russia, East Germany, and elsewhere which Nettl has put to excellent uses. And while Froelich had the advantage of having known Rosa personally, his work was marked by an almost hagiographic attitude toward his heroine and by a somewhat tortured attempt to play down the differences that existed between Rosa and Lenin. Nettl, though clearly under the spell of Rosa, writes with considerably more distance. His is a full-scale portrait, warts and all, of the woman, the revolutionary, the political activist, and the socialist theoretician. It is an unqualified success.

Even those who have some detailed knowledge of Rosa's political work and ideas and of the history of the Polish and German socialist movements during her lifetime—and I am afraid there are not very many outside the ranks of specialized historians —will now have to revise a number of their assumptions. Rosa is remembered, if at all, as the apostle of spontaneity, as a believer in the spontaneous creativity of the masses, as the inveterate adversary of party bureaucracies, be they Leninist or Social

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Democratic. But there is much more. Given, indeed, to a somewhat romantic belief in the creative potentialities of the working class—a belief which led to her most egregious political mistakes—she was yet not adverse to tight, conspiratorial and centralized political activity. Previous writers have been misled in this respect by looking at her only in terms of German socialist history. But Nettl makes clear that for the major part of her political career she was as much involved with the Polish as with the German movement. And on the Polish scene she and her close associate Leo Jogiches ran their party with rigorous, almost dictatorial, methods. They used all the political deviousness, sophistry, and intrigue which characterized so much of Russian–Polish emigré life in the prewar years. It is especially striking that Rosa, who staked her political life on a principled internationalism transcending all national interests and issues, operated completely differently in the Polish and German movements. Writes Nettl:

> It is almost as though we were dealing with two different people. The careful, secretive compartmenting was not merely convenience . . . but a substantive clash of attitudes, mutually incompatible, which had to be kept separate. To some extent Rosa was always aware of this; she lectured Jogiches about it but without realizing the extent of her own schizophrenia.

Although Rosa was an exceptionally integrated person, her every movement controlled by an overall political philsosophy, her politics were mainly reactive and were dictated by the organizational structure of the movement in which she functioned. She faced a highly organized and bureaucratized Social Democratic movement in Germany, and so she endeavored from the beginning of her career in the German party to galvanize it into action through the mobilization of "spontaneous" working-class energies. But in the Polish case there was but little mass activity till the revolution of 1905, and so she attempted to build her party, the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, by all the standard conspiratorial methods then current in the world of emigré politics in Zurich, Paris, and Berlin. All this puts a somewhat different light on her perceptive analysis and critical attack on Leninist centralism and Lenin's 'Blanquist' conceptions (1904). The final peroration, "The errors committed by a truly revolutionary movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee," still rings true in our ears, but it appears to be written from the vantage point of Rosa's involvement with the German Social Democratic party. Her Polish activities, as they are detailed in Nettl's book, appear but too often like replicas of those of Lenin in a party which, similar to his, was little more than a small elite sect. Even after the 1904 attack, it might be remarked in passing, her Polish group worked at times in close collaboration with Lenin against his Menshevik opponents.

Rosa Luxemburg's enduring claim to fame clearly derives from her activity in the German socialist movement. As one follows her trajectory from her first arrival in Berlin in 1898 to her final years as a founder of the anti-war Spartakus Bund and the Ger-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

man Communist party, one is struck by the fact that she always remained a spiritual alien in Germany. Not only did she personally dislike Germany and never could feel at home there, but she never really understood the peculiar differences between the German movement and the East European. She endeavored to infuse the German working class with that revolutionary spirit and ardor which she had absorbed in her Polish milieu and she never fully realized, it would seem, the extreme structural differences between a highly industrialized society in which the working class had a stake and conditions in which the working class was an outcast underclass. I do not mean to imply that she had no following or influence in Germany; she did. In the years of the struggle against Bernstein's revisionism, the official leadership of Bebel and Kautsky were only too pleased to use her enthusiasm and devotion in their campaign against Bernstein, so that Rosa soon became a nationally and internationally known figure. But she never fully realized, even after her break with Kautsky in 1910, how far her alliance with the official S.P.D. leadership had been built on a mutual misunderstanding. Kautsky opposed Bernstein because the latter's outspoken revisionist realism threatened to upset the cozy equilibrium of revolutionary phraseology and reformist practice on which the party officials had established their grip on the party. Rosa fought Bernstein because he opposed the Messianic vision of a coming cataclysmic Proletarian Revolution on which her whole world view was premised.

For Rosa, faith in "the masses" and their creative potential was unbounded. Not that she opposed party organization in principle, in Germany or elsewhere, as some of her Stalinist detractors have argued, but she sought at all times to prod these masses into action so as to reanimate a recalcitrant and timid party machinery. This unbounded faith in the masses is among Rosa's most endearing personal attributes; but it was also a source of her political ineffectiveness. She rejected Lenin's organizational methods – at least in the German context—but she had few concrete alternatives. She was a magnificent orator, a first-class political pamphleteer, a skillful polemicist, but when one reads her writings now through glasses that have been ground in subsequent historical experience he cannot but feel that "the masses" for Rosa always functioned as a kind of *deus ex machina* whenever a political or theoretical impasse threatened to stop her *élan*. With all that, Rosa had but little direct relation with the masses about whom she wrote. When not on lecture tours and at meetings, or in prison, she lived a rather sheltered and protected life in a fastidiously kept apartment to which only a small band of chosen party intellectuals had access. She was as alien to actual proletarians as Marx had been before her.

Luxemburg was, as Nettl recognizes with some reluctance, "a critic, albeit profound and acute, rather than a political theorist." Her polemical onslaughts against her adversaries are a pleasure to read, even today—but she proposed no alternative political theory. In the last analysis, and this makes for her profound appeal as a person as well as for her ineffectiveness as a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

theoretician, she was always moved by moral revulsion against capitalist society and by a profoundly humanitarian ideal. She represents one of the last offshoots of the great enlightenment tradition. This tradition was already dying in the West even as it still energized the Russian–Polish intellectual circles in which Rosa had spent her formative years. It was her tragedy that she approached German and West European society with sets of ideas and ideals which had already become obsolescent there. She thought that she represented the vanguard of the European proletariat while in fact the "renegade Bernstein" had a better nose for the shape of things to come.

When the war broke out, and international socialism collapsed, Rosa's world came to an end. Despite all her critical onslaughts on European Social Democracy, she was above all a part of this movement. The world of the Second International was her world, even though for many years she had riddled most of its leaders with her well-aimed arrows.

As the intellectual leader of the Spartakus League, that little band of courageous and self-sacrificing socialists who opposed the war and castigated the leaders of the S.P.D. for abandoning the principled internationalism so often proclaimed from the tribunes of International and party congresses, her activities were morally admirable but politically largely ineffective. The Spartakus League had little political influence during the war and it remained a marginal force in the preparation and the subsequent development of the revolution. Even the disastrous uprising of January 1919, which led to the assassination of Rosa, Jogiches, and Liebknecht, had not been planned by the Spartakus League. They followed it out of the morally admirable and politically suicidal urge "not to abandon the masses."

In her cool and analytical moments Rosa could give herself to deeply pessimistic short-run predictions. She originally thought that, "of course, the Bolsheviks will never be able to maintain themselves." She cautioned her young radical friends in the last days of 1918 that there was no chance of taking power in the immediate future. But finally her revolutionary *élan* would always take over and she would rush into action even though she might be intellectually unconvinced as to the chances of success. She was indeed a revolutionary Don Quixote and the Hegelian Panzas of this world have good reason to sneer at her lack of realism. She failed as a political leader, no doubt. But her moral heroism, her uncompromising political morality, her utter devotion and commitment remained an example which helped to keep socialist ideals alive through the subsequent age of destruction and despair. Her message was utopian and unrealizable, yet she helped preserve the moral vision of socialism, of a fraternal and democratic alternative to authoritarian and totalitarian collectivism.

This review cannot touch on a variety of other subjects which Mr. Nettl discusses in exhaustive detail. I have not dealt with Rosa's peculiar and obsessive opposition to Polish nationalism which put her at odds with practically all Marxists of her generation and fatally undermined her influence

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

among the Polish majority socialists as well as among the Russians. There is no space either to deal with her brilliant analysis of the Russian revolution or with her only major economic treatise *The Accumulation of Capital.* This book, even though based on a number of patently erroneous interpretations of Marx, still contains enough brilliant insights into the nature of imperialism and "underdevelopment" to put to shame all subsequent Marxist writing on the subject. The story is told, and told well, in Nettl's book and I can only urge readers to turn to it.

As was bound to happen in so large an enterprise, there are a few minor blemishes in Nettl's work. Some repetitions could easily have been eliminated with better editing. There are a few errors of fact. for example, Hermann and Kaethe Duncker, founding members of the Spartakus League and later Communist militants—whom I still had the privilege to know—were husband and wife rather than brother and sister. Also, I fail to see why several Polish militants who are usually known by their party names are referred to by their family names. Julian Marchlewski always wrote under the name of Karski and was so known in the socialist movement; Adolf Warszawski used the pseudonym Warski. To use their family names in a political history makes as much sense as to refer to Trotsky as Bronstein or to Radek as Sobelson. But these are very minor blemishes. As a whole this is a monumental achievement, a socialist biography which is equal, and in some sense superior, to Deutscher's monumental *Trotsky* volumes. One can only wish that despite its size—and its price—it will be read and pondered, especially by those members of the New Left whose devotion to "spontaneity" Rosa would have admired even as she would have been appalled by their historical and theoretical naivety.

Who Plans the Planners?

MODERN CAPITALISM, by Andrew Shonfield. New York: Oxford University Press. 456 pp. $4.50.

Modern Capitalism describes how advanced capitalist nations manage their economic affairs. It explains how the Germans control their full-employment, rapid-growth economy, how the Swedes retrain labor, how the French plan, how the Italians produce miracles, how the Americans roar around in circles, and how the British bumble. It is a good book—solid, clear, persuasive, and remarkably informative. It is not simply another collection of juxtaposed case studies. The author has a thesis, and he uses the case materials as the substance of his argument.

The argument starts with an obvious problem. Capitalism proved to be a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cataclysmic failure in the 1930's, yet it seems to be an engine of prosperity in the postwar Western world. What happened to it? Shonfield's answer is no shock: it changed.

> The central thesis of this book is that there is no reason to suppose that the patterns of the past, which have been ingeniously unravelled by the historians of the trade cycles, will reassert themselves in the future.

The burden of the book is to describe the new capitalism and to show how it represents a qualitative change in the system—not just a prolonged version of a traditional "boom."

Shonfield demonstrates that modern, or neo-capitalism, unlike the old capitalism, is not an automatic, self-regulating system: it's managed. It is managed by a partnership of the state, the giant corporations, and the trade unions. In some countries (Sweden and the U.S.A.) the trade unions are strong and active partners; in other countries (France, Italy, and Germany) they are weak and passive. Big government, big business, and, perhaps, big trade unions are necessary in order for the new system to work; but more than bigness is needed for the system to work well. How well it works depends upon how well it is managed. And here the role of the state is the critical variable. The state cannot be a passive partner; it must initiate, promote and control expansion. Shonfield finds that in some countries (France, Germany, and Italy) the state has consciously assumed a role of active leadership in the economy and has committed itself to sustaining full employment and rapid growth. In other countries (most notably England and the U.S.) the state failed to take on such an initiating role. Hence the striking contrast between the continental countries where GNP has been growing at about 4–5 percent per year since the early 'fifties and the Anglo-Saxon nations: a soggy 2½ percent rate of growth in the U.S., and an even soggier 1.7 percent in the British economy during the 'fifties.

This explanation is rather unorthodox. It emphasizes roles, attitudes, and institutions, and these are frustrating concepts for the economist. Marginal analysis, growth as a function of resource inputs, and evolving technology are more compatible with economic modes of reasoning. But Shonfield sticks to his thesis: a difference in attitude is the difference that makes a difference. The failure of the state to commit itself to an expansionist ethic and to develop the institutions necessary for a determined leadership of the economy is the principal reason for the poor performance registered by the U.S. and England in the postwar period. The initiating "interventionist" role of the state is what principally accounts for the strong showing of the continental economies during that same period. Many economists would disagree with this view; many more would qualify it. Perhaps fewer would disagree with its corollary; if you want to invigorate the economies of the English-speaking nations, public policy is the best place to start. The booming results of the Keynesian palliatives administered to the U.S. economy as soon as Eisenhower's entourage of bumblers was out of Washington seems to have demonstrated conclusively just how effective government action could be —even when limited to simple Key-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nesian remedies. The prolonged nature of our boom seems to clinch Shonfield's analysis of the U.S. economy in the 'fifties: a pre-Keynesian outlook (the George Humphrey approach to government policy) is just plain idiocy. But it seems to trouble his more important argument: Keynesian bromides are not enough.

Mr. Shonfield does not really provide criteria for judging performance that go beyond a high rate of growth and a low rate of unemployment. That is why the U.S. boom can cause his analysis so much trouble. If the boom can be sustained on the force of purely Keynesian policy (plus a small war), he doesn't have much basis for arguing that more than Keynesian economics are needed. Would not Shonfield's argument be more convincing—and more relevant—if it were based on the need to direct, as well as to sustain, expansion? For the Keynesian formulas don't get at the problem of the sectoral composition of growth, at the choices confronting our economy —between more cars or more hospitals, more cities or more highways, more guns or more Metracal. The performance of the U.S. economy these past five years indicates that it might be possible to maintain expansion without going "beyond Keynes" as Shonfield advocates. Not many American economists are convinced of the need to go beyond the Keynesian economics that have recently become Established in Washington. Still fewer would be prepared to endorse the French–German model Shonfield recommends.

Shonfield's analysis of French planning is excellent; he sees through the fog of rhetoric and decorative institutions that surrounds the Plan and gets at how it actually works. He refers to the Plan first as a specific institution and then as a symbol for the general partnership between the interventionist state and big business. But he frequently fails to indicate which role he is talking about. This tends to make the planning institution appear far more influential than it now is. In any case, he was not "taken in" by the Plan the way many other enthusiasts of French planning have been; he likes it for what it is.

Despite its rhetoric of "democratic planning" and "popular participation," the French plan is run by a small group of permanent government officials, bankers and corporation executives: the partnership. (Neither Parliament nor the trade unions exert any real influence.) It doesn't plan all economic activities; it focuses its attention on directing investment in the growth sectors (mostly oligopoly industries) and thereby steers the nation's development. No production quotas are issued from a central planning bureau; no threats of nationalization are made. No real difference seems to exist between planning for the nationalized firms such as Renault or Air France, and planning for privately owned giants such as Citroen, Michelin or Pechiney. Committees of businessmen and government officials prepare long-term investment and output programs for each industry. The targets are bargained out among the two participants—the business executives and the government officials.

Bargaining is the key word: neither side dictates to the other. Both know that long-run cooperation is essential. Business wants high profits. The state

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has no objection whatever to high profits—so long as investment remains high. Indeed, the working principle of French "indicative" planning is a fundamental harmony of interest between big business and the state: what is good for Michelin Rubber is good for the nation. The Plan encourages firms that have been reluctant to expand as rapidly as wanted through the use of a complex system of differential favors or incentives.

The way the system works is simple. The state buys the cooperation of the firm. Tax rebates and tax deductions, accelerated depreciation allowances, cheap credit, even direct subsidies are used to encourage expansion. These are made available to one industry and not another, to one firm and not another. As Shonfield points out, this kind of discriminatory interventionism has a long history in France. Behind the collection of "carrots" is the stick—but it is rarely used. Few firms would risk the ill favor of a state apparatus that possesses such complete discretion in the exercise of its power. Furthermore, few large firms have any real objection to following most of the plan; they had a big hand in writing it, and the non-oligopoly industries are not often included in the Plan.

Success under modern capitalism means more than just rapid growth; it means orderly growth. A four-year development plan in which expansion programs for the principle industries are made mutually consistent reduces bottlenecks, investment hesitations, investment fluctuations, and similar disorderly effects of uncertainty.

The Germans have no "plan"—the word is taboo in Bonn. But Shonfield shows that the West German economy has a similar steering committee. Behind the German love songs to Lucius Clay and Adam Smith, the directors of the state, the giant corporations and the great banks coordinate investments. The bankers are the crucial link. They plan without a "plan" quite as effectively as the French plan with their Plan—perhaps even more effectively. In Germany the bankers control the sources of investment funds and, through their interlocking control of the major companies, they control the uses of that capital. The cartel manages the supply side and the state acts on the demand side. It keeps taxes high and holds back inflationary pressures. The trade unions cooperate: they accept the "trickle down." In France the planning institution is useful on the supply side where civil servants and corporation executives steer investment, but a succession of insecure governments (prior to de Gaulle) proved unable to control demand as firmly as the German authorities. Shonfield ought to have examined the difficulties the French have had in coordinating government policy on prices and incomes with the investment plan. The lack of such coordination has been the primary cause of many of the failures of French planning.

Despite striking differences in formal structures (a nominally democratic plan vs. a nominal commitment to the "free market") the French and German economies are planned in a roughly similar manner. They are directed by a small group of professional managers who are committed to expansion, full employment and high profits, and who unflinchingly believe that they are acting in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

public interest. Shonfield refers to the French plan as " a conspiracy in the public interest." These are the stewards of power, and they get few instructions from the legitimate source of power, Parliament.

The French Parliament abdicated its responsibilities in this area a long time ago and reaffirms that abdication daily. Since the first plan which was promulgated by Executive decree in 1946 (ironically, it was Léon Blum who signed the decree), Parliament has exerted no real influence on planning. Recently, the democratic Left in France has discovered that a national economic plan is not necessarily an instrument of the Left and is proposing various reforms to "democratize planning." For example, Mendès-France advocates the creation of a new house of Parliament, composed of representatives of economic groups, to deal with economic matters. The proposal is frankly corporatist (see his *La République Moderne,* 1962). But so, Shonfield finds, is the present drift of things in France and Germany. All the Left asks is to be let into the game.

The new corporatism has little in common with the prewar product that made "corporatism" a dirty word: it is not an unholy alliance of plutocrats, demagogues, punks, and a lower middle class frightened of proletarianization, pitted against the working class and the productive middle. Rather, it is rule by the stewards of the great economic interests in—what they earnestly believe to be—the public interest.

Shonfield's analysis is perceptive and courageous. He unravels the basic trends and does not hesitate before the nasty sounding conclusion: corporatism. But he fails to consider the implications of this drift. He tries but he fails. His concluding chapter, which deals with the "political implications" of the basic changes he has diagnosed, is weak. It fails to take up the questions he raises earlier in the book; it wanders; it hesitates; *ridiculous mus nascitur:* Ombudsmen and better research staffs for members of Parliament. The book would be better without the concluding chapter.

The basic institutions of our economies—giant private corporations, giant trade unions, and giant welfare-oriented governments—preclude a return to any other system. That means that, for the moment at least, we are stuck with what Shonfield calls modern capitalism. But, he argues, we have yet to learn to make that system perform satisfactorily. The reasons for this are historical; our failure is rooted in our proudest institutions. The continental countries have a traditional disposition toward the attitudes and institutions that complement modern capitalism. The English-speaking nations have a traditional aversion to those attitudes and institutions. Liberal economics, then Keynesian economics (an outgrowth of classical theory) have dominated thought in the U.S. and England. Neither classical economics nor Keynesianism ever caught on in France or Germany; nor, for that matter, did liberal democracy. Cartels, executive discretion, *dirigisme,* even corporatism have always been attractive to the French and the Germans; they have always been repugnant to the British and the Americans.

Thus Shonfield finds that during

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the 'fifties the U.S. economy performed poorly because of Washington's unwillingness to assume a strong leadership role. The political leaders and the permanent bureaucracy paid homage to the doctrine of separation of public and private economic power. They kept "hands off" and provided "equal treatment." That is not to say that the state did not exert an enormous influence on the economy—the mere weight of the federal budget precludes such a role—but rather that federal power was not systematically used to direct development the way it was in France and Germany. Furthermore, behind the lack of will, Shonfield finds a lack of means. As he describes it, the structure of the American political system is brilliantly contrived for self-paralysis. He argues that our Constitutional architecture of checks and balances and our national fetish for scattering power make it impossible for the state to coordinate its own activities and to begin to use the whole of its power in a determined way. Congress guards its powers jealously—when other parliaments are abandoning theirs to the executive. A maze of isolated and independent regulatory commissions baffles coordinated policy. I think Shonfield exaggerates the structural obstacles. He also underestimates the importance of eight years of sheer mindlessness under Eisenhower and the costs of almost a decade of dumb drift. The structures didn't work because no one tried to make them work.

Modern Capitalism covers the whole range of Western economic experience. It presents a staggering amount of useful information in a lively manner. No committee of experts, each writing on his own field, could produce such an informative book, because they could never provide the unending flow of comparisons which give the book its greatest worth and greatest interest. It reads well and will interest the general reader as much as the professional economist. Shonfield makes no A.F.L.-type distinctions between economics, political science, sociology, and history. He is not a social scientist. He writes well. He uses verbs. STEPHEN COHEN

MASS SLAUGHTER IN INDONESIA (continued from page 466)

But since the slaughter in Indonesia was done in the name of anti-Communism, neither editorialists nor government officials grow excited. To me, however, this kind of political murder is just as appalling when committed by anti-Communists as by Communists. As a life-long opponent of Communist totalitarianism, I think it a special obligation for those of us who despise the dictatorship of a Sukarno or a Ho Chi Minh also to express our horror before the bloodletting initiated or condoned by a Suharto.

And perhaps the first thing that might be done is for a paper like the *Times* to get someone to write from Indonesia who is willing to "drop his cool" just a little; who is ready to dig more deeply into the terrible events in recent Indonesian life; and to turn a skeptical eye upon the claim that men seemingly implicated in mass slaughter can then go ahead to build "democracy." IRVING HOWE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS

The Professor's Responsibility

Editor:

The issues between me and Mr. Hoffman (DISSENT, July–August 1966), each as representatives of points of view, are so important, I believe, both for the fate of academia and the moral texture of our society, that I think space and time for a reply are justified.

Let me restate his argument briefly:

a. The numbers of students to be drafted will be unaffected by any or all professors' grading or refusing to grade.
b. If the professor won't grade, some "high-grade" students will be drafted in place of some low-grade ones.
c. The professor is thus selecting by not selecting.
d. He has thus interfered against "high-grade" students.
e. Moreover, he is robbing all students of other competitive benefits of grading.
f. Things are no better if universities refuse to report.
g. Nor if the Professor withdraws from teaching—unless he continues the process of withdrawal from all war-involved activity to the point of total social exile, itself the ultimate in social immorality.
h. Therefore: Stay in society and work to end the war, abolish the draft or abolish student deferments.

Let me also reply briefly. I take (a) and (b) for granted. And for those who wish to end the war, and/or abolish the draft, and/or work for the abolition of student deferment, I take it that they will pursue (h) with vigor and passion and skill—even while they may wish and work to save the educational enterprise from further corruption.

I cannot—perhaps wrongly—take (c) and (d) seriously. And, moreover, I believe that, if taken seriously, they undermine all that stands between this society and a totalitarian one. Let me analogize. Suppose I am a psychologist—an IQ "expert." Suppose the state determines that low-grade morons are expendable (whether by genocide, as in Germany, or by sending them away to perish on "virgin lands" or in "foreign wars"). Suppose they require not their openly labelled hirelings, but psychologists in educational or private practice to furnish IQ data for their manhunt. And suppose their need—for war, land-development, or permanent anaesthesia—is a constant number. Is it really true that I am morally forced to cooperate (or go through an empty ritual of self-purification)? On the ground that otherwise the state may or will, by error or out of pique, seize and destroy the higher IQ'd? And that refusal to cooperate is an interference by me against the higher IQ'd? But what can I then not be forced to do? If a doctor, help select the weak for extermination lest otherwise the state select the strong? or at random? Surely not. Surely, I *must* refuse. And incite first my fellow-professionals to refuse. And from that position, begin a more general scheme of roll-back, if it is at all possible. And, if this is not allowed (g)—must I not leave my profession rather than participate directly, especially if, in the short run, I cannot get the whole scheme abandoned? I am sure that in doing so, I would be robbing industry of my help in placement and clients of help in getting non-fatally placed (d). But this is surely a small price to pay.

In this conjuncture, as a professional educator, I propose to draw the line where the state invades and destroys, in a radically new manner, what possibilities of education are left. Let all else follow. Let us roll back from there.

JOHN R. SEELEY

Have you moved?

•

Send both old and new address to:

DISSENT: 509 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10017

•

Allow three weeks
for change to become effective

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Arnold S. Kaufman

A Call to Radicalism

WHERE SHALL LIBERALS GO?

Many religious exercises are entered into with seeming fervour, where the heart, at the time, feels cold and languid: A habit of dissimulation is by degrees contracted: And fraud and falsehood become the predominant principle.

—David Hume

If he is to think politically in a realistic way, the intellectual must constantly know his own social position. This is necessary in order that he may be aware of the sphere of strategy that is really open to his influence. If he forgets this, his thinking may exceed his sphere of strategy so far as to make impossible any translation of his thought into action, his own or that of others. His thought may become fantastic. If he remembers his powerlessness too well, assumes that his sphere of strategy is restricted to the point of impotence, then his thought may easily become politically trivial. In either case, fantasy and powerlessness may well be the lot of his mind.

—C. Wright Mills

Contents

Introduction 556
I. The Heart of Liberalism 558
II. The Need for a Turn Toward Radicalism 563
III. The Politics of Pseudo-Realism 574
IV. The Politics of Self-Indulgence 586
V. The Alternative: The Politics of Radical Pressure 593
VI. American Liberalism and Foreign Policy 606

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Introduction

Seldom have American liberals been so feverishly divided about anything as they are today about the Administration's Vietnam policies. The rough consensus that liberals had arrived at on both domestic and foreign policy issues has been rudely shattered by the reverberations of this war.

It would be a mistake to suppose that this rift is an isolated case—an accident of shifting political events. Rather, the growing disagreement among liberals is a dramatic symptom of latent differences that have too long been obscured by consensus-making rhetoric. The previously dormant issues are fundamental. For they include questions about the nature and function of democracy, the nature and actual threat of Communism, and the political strategies that best serve liberal aims.

Liberals have been too preoccupied with their internal conflict, too shocked by its intensity, to have spent much time trying to articulate the bases of disagreement as clearly and comprehensively as the task deserves. The critics of American liberalism have, by contrast, been actively analyzing and attacking. Both Right and Left accuse liberals of being self-deluded, weak-willed, and pusillanimous. But where the Right maintains that liberal cowardice consists of being soft on Communism, the Left holds that its weakness consists in fearful deference to the metaphysicians of the Cold War. The Right views liberals as leading America down the road to serfdom; the Left as permitting America's fate to be determined by corporate elites whose exclusive concern is with protection of vested interests. Yet both criticisms fail, though not in equal measure, because neither set of critics is capable of seeing that the present crisis of American liberalism is due primarily to liberalism's failure properly to exploit its own traditional resources. For the liberal tradition possesses moral and intellectual resources richer than those of any competing tradition. The Right fails to acknowledge this because it rejects or distorts that tradition; the Left fails because, in its passion for a new revolutionary rhetoric, it blinds itself to the radical implications of liberalism's very old aims and principles.

Too many liberals respond to their critics by splitting the difference. They balance the "extremist radicalism" of the Right against the "extremist radicalism" of the Left, and congratulate themselves for displaying intelligence and moral acumen. But "extremism" is not a matter of radical policies. Extremism is essentially an abuse of the traditions of reason and civility.

Liberals themselves participate in extremist politics so conceived. Their participation is expressed in two deranged forms of political life

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—the politics of pseudo-realism and the politics of self-indulgence. The former is rooted in the belief that political action in pursuit of goals that are not "possible" or "practical" is irrational. The latter, in the belief that political action that does not express to the full a person's "authentic" moral feelings is insincere and immoral.

The concept of "realism" involved in the first is defective; the form of "authenticity" involved in the second is spurious. The politics of pseudo-realism cuts the nerve of action; the politics of self-indulgence impedes effective action. Though pseudo-realism grows out of cupidity, ambition, fear, prudence, a tendency to moral masochism, lack of compassion, and weariness, it is nourished by defective commitment to the traditions of reason. And though self-indulgence is promoted by passionate moral commitment, frustration, moral outrage, romantic exuberance, and generational mistrust, it too is nourished by defective commitment to the traditions of reason.

In this essay I will examine in detail both of these political styles. For an important burden of my argument is to show that the defects of contemporary American liberalism are due in the main to a breakdown in the institutions of reason. The analysis will proceed on the basis of caricature: idealized profiles that describe no individual perfectly. This method is justified on the grounds that these composite profiles do identify important and coherent tendencies that anyone familiar with the contemporary American political scene should have little difficulty in recognizing.

But the main burden of my argument is to show that liberalism's survival as a vital force in American politics depends on a resolute turn towards radicalism. For if unreason is the main defect of those who practice the politics of self-indulgence, the serious moral concern and desire to live authentically that make them radical are conditions also of authentic liberalism.

The problem of specifying the political style that a radical-liberal ought to adopt cannot be resolved without sketching a theory of democracy. For political styles invariably presuppose views about the decision-making processes of a society. The two deranged forms of political life, pseudo-realism and self-indulgence, are intimately related to defective conceptions of democracy. Hence, the other major burden of my argument is to elaborate and defend a conception of democracy that provides a theoretical basis for the form of political life radical-liberals should adopt.

In the sections that follow, I first state what lies at the heart of liberal doctrine. I then argue that the conditions in this country are

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

such that no one can be authentically liberal unless he is radical. The analysis and criticism of the politics of pseudo-liberalism and self-indulgence that follow lead to a statement of the theory of democracy and of the political strategy radical-liberals ought to embrace. In the final section I apply the results of all that has gone before to the problems of foreign policy because these are the problems that most agitate liberals today and most fully expose to public view the deepening rift within our ranks.

I. The Heart of Liberalism

Liberalism is a political theory, and therefore provides a guide to the making of public policy. All liberals share the belief that the ultimate aim of public policy is the protection and promotion of each person's equal opportunity to develop his potentialities as fully as possible. The limits of possibility for the individual are partly set by unalterable biological, physical and social circumstances. But additional moral limits are set by the constraints of civility—those traits of character that make possible stability, mutual trust, collective regard for human welfare, and justice in the organization of society.

These convictions, though basic, are not distinctive to liberalism. A Marxist who is also a humanist could accept them. A liberal and such a Marxist would, however, normally disagree in two fundamental ways.

Marxists have always tended to be more optimistic than liberals about the possibility of transforming the social order in ways that will eliminate the need for organized reliance on instruments of force and violence. Expressed in the doctrine of "the withering away of the state," Marxists have traditionally tended to accept the view that neither self-regarding nor anti-social traits are indelibly etched in human beings. They have supposed that these traits can be erased by the right sort of social environment. Whether crossed by Hobbes, Freud, Niebuhr, or Sartre, liberals typically range from cautious scepticism to outright pessimism about the prospect of achieving that final alteration in the human constitution necessary to transform man's earthly condition into a veritable heaven of warm-hearted relationships.

Nevertheless, disagreement in this respect is one of emphasis—and increasingly so. For responsible Marxists, especially those in countries where Communism has assumed power, are fast revising their views on this point. The evident need to deal with economic inefficiency by reintroducing competitive market mechanisms has compelled them to acknowledge, in practice at least, the psychological truth on which ad-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

herence to the market mechanism has been traditionally based: that in any social situation normal persons are, to some extent, incorrigibly acquisitive.

The second disagreement is more definite and intractable than the first. Marxists believe that by eliminating what they call "the alienation of labor" all the other chronic ills of society that are remediable will also disappear. This *principle of the sufficiency of unalienated labor* requires the elimination of two conditions that, for the Marxist, constitute alienation of labor: the unjust distribution of the products of work and the stultifying character of the conditions of work.

Liberals may argue about how we are to understand "distributive justice," but otherwise they agree with the Marxist's moral assessment of the alienation of labor. Liberals do not, however, accept the principle of the sufficiency of unalienated labor. For they do not share the Marxist's belief that all the chronic and remediable ills of society will disappear once the alienation of labor has been ended. In particular, liberals are convinced that political democracy, by which they *at least* mean the right of any group to organize political opposition to existing power, is independent of alienation of labor, and just as basic to the realization of a good society. They believe that those who are opposed to existing institutional arrangements should normally have the fullest possible freedom to contest prevailing power by spreading alternative aims and programs before the public. Liberals concede that political democracy is not always desirable; for, as John Stuart Mill emphasized in *Representative Government,* there are cultural and economic prerequisites of formal democracy. But where these prerequisites do not exist, society should be so organized as to develop them as rapidly as possible. And this requires that a *liberal* case against complete freedom to speak, to publish, and to organize be established with absolute decisiveness before any departure from maximum freedom can be regarded as morally permissible. Liberals may no longer agree with Lord Acton's claim that "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely"; but they are convinced that even benevolent power is used manipulatively, and that absolute power tends to be used to manipulate absolutely. Increasingly it is manipulation rather than the naked exercise of power that poses the greatest threat to liberal institutions.

Here we come to the two ideals that most people regard as distinctive of liberalism: liberty and rational choice. Authentic liberalism implies that the cherished fulfillment of human potentialities can only be achieved through *self*-fulfillment. Moreover, formal liberty to live according to unreflective preference will not suffice. The choices must also

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be made thoughtfully. In a brief sentence, liberals believe that *a good society is one in which each person possesses the resource of materials, mind and spirit, as well as the opportunities, to carve out a career in conformity to that person's own nature and reasoned choice.*

If a liberal is a utilitarian, he regards these resources and the freedom to utilize them as essential conditions of a satisfying life. But many liberals also regard freedom as intrinsically valuable, perhaps even divinely endowed with value. Metaphysical differences of this sort are philosophically but not politically important. For the different beliefs are consistent with the core of liberal conviction that I have tried to articulate.

This is not the place to develop in detail the implications of this doctrine. Nevertheless, the liberal attitudes towards democracy and the welfare state require special discussion because they provide the focus for much left-wing criticism of American liberalism.

Liberal emphasis on the importance of liberty and human rights, and the corresponding sensitivity to the danger of tyrannical abuse of corporate power, has resulted in an insistence on the fundamental value of political democracy. As I argued, this conviction marks the most important difference between liberalism and Marxist humanism. Yet the conviction has in many ways been the soft underbelly of the liberal position. For, too often, in "bourgeois" society formal democracy *has* been "the talking shop" that Marx claimed it was. Parliamentary institutions have been used by vested power to shape the form of policy in manipulatively appealing ways, without affecting its substance. And even when political democracy functions constructively, it is far from providing the panacea for social evils that many like to think it does.

Expression of disdain for political democracy by many on the Left is, therefore, quite understandable. Indeed, we need more, not less, legitimate criticism of the way in which men who are profoundly undemocratic in spirit and action use the instruments of formal democracy to manipulate consensus about matters with respect to which no one can reasonably expect consensus. The time is long overdue for liberals to attack those who, on the pretext of calling the faithful to reason together, use the occasion to manipulate and mesmerize opposition.

But criticism from the Left which proclaims commitment to "participatory democracy" and disdain for American liberalism in the same breath is ironical. For the need to deepen and enrich the quality of the democratic process, to make it both more deliberative and more participatory, flows directly from the central doctrines of liberalism as I have stated them. Those who proclaim their transcendental commitment to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

democracy in attacking the liberal tradition have either not read, or not understood Rousseau,* John Stuart Mill, L. T. Hobhouse, or John Dewey—to mention but a few of the major liberal theorists.

On the other hand, a person who views democracy exclusively in terms of a system of countervailing powers fails to understand that stability and protection against tyranny are neither the only functions of democracy, nor always the most important. At least equally important is provision of the institutional soil which nourishes those very tendencies, sentiments, and powers of mind that enable a person both deliberatively to carve out his career and to play a responsible role in shaping social policies that vitally affect his life. To this extent, the proper charge against uncritical admirers of a conception of democracy conceived exclusively as a way to maintain a delicately balanced system of competing powers, is not that they are too liberal but that they have lost touch with the very core of liberalism. Few are more guilty of fostering the illiberal preference for a countervailing power conception of democracy than those liberals who practice the politics of pseudo-realism—a point that will be subsequently developed.

It is easy, however, to exaggerate this criticism of the liberal realist's conception of democracy. For if a conception of countervailing power is not the whole of a liberal theory of democracy, it is at least an essential part. It is difficult to see how, in the long run, a more participatory and deliberative conception of democracy can be made to function effectively except by preparing the ground for its growth through a system of coalition politics. In such a system the inherent instability of the main coalitions permits both movement and that degree of general social stability without which chaos or revolution would result. Moreover, only within a structure that institutionalizes the competition for power can the tendency to use the instruments of a participatory democracy in manipulative ways be effectively countered—as Yugoslavia's otherwise exciting experiment with workers' councils is beginning to make clear. As these points go to the heart of my criticism of many who practice the politics of self-indulgence, I will develop the argument more fully later. In regard to welfare programs, liberal realists and those who practice the politics of self-indulgence make mistakes that parallel their defective ideas about democracy. The realists exaggerate the virtues of the welfare state; some in the New Left underestimate both its accomplishment and potentials.

---

* I know there are many who will object to this characterization of Rousseau. Here I can only say that Rousseau's masterwork, the *Social Contract*, is one of the most misread and, consequently, abused books in the history of political philosophy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Too many liberals sincerely justify a structure of welfare institutions that undermines a person's sense of responsibility, his dignity, and his freedom to make his own choices. Whether expressed as a reform theory of punishment or as a therapeutic theory of social services, there is too much tendency to coerce and manipulate "clients" for their own good. I see no essential moral difference between a rapidly growing social-work profession guided by the notion that it is proper to compel or induce persons to accept therapeutically sound life goals, and a Big Brotherly effort to shape the inner life of citizens so that they come to prefer conformity over dissent, regardless of where the weight of morality and reason may lie.

From these remarks it does *not* follow that the accomplishments of welfare politics are negligible. Perhaps the ability to realize unsound "bourgeois" preferences is part of the price that must be paid for that minimal level of cradle-to-grave economic security without which the very possibility of a transmutation of values can not be achieved. If so, it is a price that should be paid. The unrestrained denunciation of the accomplishments of the welfare state that has become increasingly common among many on the "New Left" is an arrogance, a piece of cultural snobbery, that must be criticized and fought by genuine liberals.

To sum up, liberals aim at conditions that permit and encourage every person to develop his potentialities as fully as possible. This can only happen when efforts to shape both career and public policy are controlled by the disciplines of reason. For liberals, complete freedom is the indispensable *condition* of these goals—qualified only by the moral and prudential constraints of civility, and of liberalism itself. They believe that except for societies in which the cultural and economic prerequisites of democracy have not been achieved, parliamentary institutions are required. And even in the former, the growing points of parliamentary institutions must be steadily created and consolidated. But participatory democracy is both an outcome, and I would here add, a condition of the more "formal" democracy of countervailing coalitions. For no society can pull itself up by its bootstraps. Just as it needs accumulations of capital to fuel its economic growth, so it needs accumulations of the essential traits of the responsible citizen to fuel its political growth. And how are such traits to be acquired without the sustained experience of taking responsibility?

While chary of those who view welfare benefits as a means of manipulating the "needy" into some "therapist's" version of the good life, or into political quiescence, liberals recognize that such benefits are hard-won, valuable concessions wrung at great cost from those who have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clung to privilege. Liberals are, therefore, committed to the task of completing the work of the welfare state, even as they move politically to cope with some of the basic disorders of social life the remedies for which may finally lie beyond the welfare state.

A critic of liberalism may point out the lack of any emphasis on fraternity, community, fellowship in the account I have given. The liberal may properly reply that he has always believed that, to the extent that satisfactory human relationships are possible, their realization depends on the existence of persons who possess dignity, self-esteem, and the cultural and industrial resources required to lead productive and meaningful lives. If society is arranged so that these qualities and resources are possessed by the maximum number of persons possible, then we have done all that can be done *through politics* to satisfy the aspirations people have for communion and salvation.

Implicit in this last remark is a very important thesis—one that has always been inherent in liberal theory. *Politics is limited.* Those who seek to fulfill apocalyptic visions through political activity are bound to become disillusioned. If Calvin, Hobbes, or Freud are correct in their descriptions of human nature, the salvation sought is beyond our worldly reach. Even if pessimistic accounts of human nature are mistaken, there is a sphere of personal struggle and aspiration that one may never be able to affect through the control of the crude levers of power with which political groups must ultimately be content. The realization that this is so is at once the end of innocence and the beginning of effectiveness in the pursuit of legitimate social goals.

II. The Need for a Turn Toward Radicalism

The United States is the representative industrial nation; a harbinger of what nations taking their first, halting steps towards full industrialization may expect—and a warning. Though we have achieved a degree of material affluence that boggles the imagination, the moral and aesthetic costs have often been too high.

The magnitude of American wealth and power has made certain ideals feasible goals of public policy. The President who proclaimed a war on national poverty yesterday proclaims a war on world hunger today. He announces that this country's mission is to defend freedom around the globe. Freedom, he reminds us, is indivisible. But if his actions are any test of actual intentions, he really does not mean it. For the War on Poverty is financially skimpy and politically hamstrung from the start. Success in the war on hunger will require vastly more than the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

convenient emptying of the granaries holding America's immense agricultural surpluses. And the sincerity of our defense of freedom is rendered somewhat more than doubtful by our actions in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic—to mention only the two most recent outrages in the conduct of American foreign policy.

The point I am making is this: We seem to have entered a political era in which the rhetoric of liberalism is unrestrainedly used either to defend programs of liberal reform that are minimal in magnitude and scope, or to rationalize programs that are illiberal in spirit and intent. In so doing, the present Administration is merely carrying to its most extravagant conclusion a misuse of the rhetoric of liberalism in which every political leader has to some extent participated. Increasingly, Administrations have tended to substitute liberal rhetoric for liberal policy in an effort to allay discontent without risking substantial change. But the strategy will not work for reasons that are entirely out of the control of any American government, except one genuinely prepared to match radical deed to radical word.

There is a dialectic of disorder at work in the world. It is a dialectic every bit as ruthless in its impact on human hopes and values as any Hegel ever dreamed of. It spares no society, and few people. It is impartial in the way it defeats the plans of both dropouts and Presidents. And the misuse of the rhetoric of liberalism has contributed in no small measure to the operation of that dialectic.

For even empty rhetoric generates aspirations among people who take it seriously. Aspirations kindle new and concrete hopes. But then the emptiness of the rhetoric is revealed in the paucity and perversion of the implementing programs. Thus expectations are not fulfilled, and frustration and bitter anger result. The expression of this anger differs, depending on the intensity of the expectations and the extent of the gap between program and fulfillment. In the ghettoes of Los Angeles and Rochester there are bloody riots. At Berkeley there are all-night sit-ins and "filthy speech." At Michigan, teach-ins. In Mississippi, an attempt is made to take over an air base. And America's Catholic hierarchy encounters the most exasperating challenge to its authority from subordinate priests and laymen with which it has ever had to deal.

But the dialectic of disorder that results from the gap between rhetoric and practice in the United States is as nothing when compared with the ferocious consequences of frustrated expectations and revolutionary action abroad. In Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Nigeria, in Syria, the Congo, and Yemen, men and women touched by hope and expectation for the first time in their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lives, for the first time in the lives of generations, are plunged into open and bloody rebellion. But our leaders seem to understand the one no better than the other. The Sheriff Clark who terrorizes children is but a step removed from Chief Parker who believes that the only way to deal with the rioters of Watts is to beat them over the head. And he in turn is but a step away from the President who, despite all his disclaimers, places his faith mainly in napalm and rockets. What price freedom? Approximately nine noncombatants and $375,000 per Viet Cong dead.* I am sure that each of these men must, in a quiet moment, suffer nausea at the things they "must" authorize. They are as much victims as oppressors. And they do differ substantially in their moral outlook. But they have in common an inability to understand the dialectic of disorder; and a consequent tendency to cope with disorder by beating people over the head.

Equally important—they mistake political quiescence for joy. Before the Montgomery bus boycott the entire segregationist population of the South had deluded itself into believing that the "darkies" were content with their lot. One Southern segregationist recently echoed that mood unwittingly when he wistfully complained that he could not understand why "the niggers ain't singing anymore." This victim of Southern racism is unable to understand that, when one cannot hope, there is little to do but mask misery and terror with song. But once hope is kindled, the songs end, the dialectic of disorder begins, and, before long, disorderly process is converted into insistent political pressure.

Thus, if liberal rhetoric does breed anger and discord, it also generates hope and political movement. This at least is to the good. For the time is brought closer when American liberals will reclaim their rhetoric and put it firmly back into the service of radical change. Confronted by the sordid reality of American affluence, it is impossible for someone to be authentically liberal without turning resolutely toward radicalism. Thus, to the extent that the rhetoric of political leaders encourages sincere commitment to liberalism, it also fosters opposition to the illiberal allocation of America's vast resources, and to the illiberal use of America's vast power.

The time must come when the recitation of past liberal achievements no longer tranquilizes American liberals. For scrutiny of the present state of American society discovers a reality that is at least as outrageous as it is full of products and promise.

---

*Bernard B. Fall, "And Still the Little Men of the Vietcong Keep Coming," *New York Times Magazine*, March 6, 1966, p. 21. A. D. Borchgrave, "Then and Now—The Difference," *Newsweek*, March 14, 1966, p. 41.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1. The Distribution of Wealth

The United States is economically one of the most unequal societies in the world, and the most affluent. The fifth of the nation that is poverty-stricken gives the lie to any claim that we have learned how to manage our affluence in a humanly acceptable way.

The very magnitude of our national resources makes it possible to maintain an adequate incentive system, and still meet all the functional needs generated by the moral preeminence of personal self-development in the liberal scheme of things. Ironically, just when Communist nations are discovering that they must reintroduce sharper material incentives, the United States is in a position to reverse the emphasis traditionally placed on them.

Increasingly, the most important incentives are the quality of the conditions of work and the value the individual places on the products of his labor. It is clear that the main barriers to redistribution are not those that flow from the requirements of continued economic growth, but the entrenched power of moneyed elites who, either out of habit or acquisitiveness, insist on interpreting the rhetoric of American freedom in the least human way possible. These forces are often unwittingly abetted by good-hearted folk who are willing to accept the first, tiny product of massive legislative effort as sufficient because it is so beguilingly packaged by the Great Society.

For the indefinite future, the problems of redistribution are going to be complicated by the technological revolution that is in process. The long-term prospect is steady attrition in the supply of jobs. Thus, the nation is conditioned to accept as a triumph of political statesmanship a rate of unemployment that a humane society should not tolerate.

The dialectic of disorder operates with increasing ferocity in this area. Rent strikes, a rising crime rate, intensified problems of juvenile delinquency, and the growth of general contempt for formal authority are only a few of the by-products of the growing gap between the rhetoric of affluence and the reality of poverty. And these disorders are increasingly independent of the problem of race.

2. Civil Rights

The United States is still a predominantly racist society. Economically, socially, legally, politically, and perhaps most important of all, educationally, we have eliminated many legal barriers, yet have made little progress in fact. In comparison with fifteen years ago, Negroes are more segregated, receive a smaller proportion of the national income, constitute a higher proportion of the unemployed, the under-educated,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the blue-collar work force. The only area in which Negroes appear to have made massive gains during the last decade and a half is in the proportion of war-time casualties they are constrained to accept. For in the Vietnam War, over 14 percent of the combatants and 18 percent of the casualties are Negro soldiers, though only about 10 percent of the total population is Negro.* Thus we are confronted by the supreme moral irony; those who share least in the fruits of American freedom are, in its alleged defense, making the supreme sacrifice proportionately more of the time than those who benefit most.

The White majority and its allies within the Negro middle class are oblivious to these facts. They are all too ready to accept the tokens of political appointment, the forms of a changing legal code, the apparent moderation of more virulent racial attitudes, and the promise of presidential rhetoric for the substance of significant change. But though there may have been substantial progress for a small proportion of lucky Negroes, the great bulk of the 20 million Negroes in America have participated in this progress only to the extent that their expectations have risen without a proportionate increase in the relative extent to which those expectations are satisfied.

Twelve years after the school desegregation decision, 95 percent of Southern schools are segregated. Though unemployment for all groups is down, the rate of Negro unemployment relative to whites is rising. Since 1955, in Alabama, 20 persons have been murdered in circumstances growing out of the civil rights movement, and no one has to date been convicted for any of these crimes. In Harlem the mortality rate at birth for Negroes is currently 45 per 1,000; for the total New York City population, including the Negroes of Harlem, about 25 per 1,000. In Mississippi the median income for Negroes is 32 percent of the median income for whites. These are but a few of the large number of facts that dramatize the gap between what Negroes have been promised and what they have actually received. A white majority, spoon-fed facts that largely point to progress in civil rights, is then utterly astonished by violence in Watts or Rochester.

This white majority and its Negro allies then grow impatient at the rising tempo of demonstrations, violence, and threatened violence by Negroes. The characteristic reaction of officialdom, whether in Selma or in Watts, is to club the incorrigibles into submission. In no other phase

*It is true that many of the Negroes in combat in Vietnam are formally volunteers. But when they can escape from the black belt of the South or the ghettoes of the North only by enlisting in the Army, then we have compulsion. As one VISTA worker in Alabama told me recently, many young Negroes he encountered were happy to be accepted by the Armed forces. But their motive was escape, not patriotism.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of domestic life, however, does the dialectic of disorder work with such ruthless efficiency to destroy the illusions of those "decent and respectable" Americans who stand ready to do anything—anything at all—to improve human relations—*except* seriously to contemplate the necessity of relinquishing many of their basic social and economic prerogatives.

3. Education

The Groves of Academe are increasingly the scene of guerrilla warfare. Sit-ins, teach-ins, demonstrations, filthy-speech, and teachers' strikes —all are the products of the same fundamental disorders of American education. Disorderly process in our schools, a source of so much perplexity to most, is not difficult to understand from the point of view of liberalism.

For education, more than any other process, is essential to the achievement of a society in which persons carve out their destiny according to their natures and their own deliberative choices. It is in our schools that the traditions of reason should be honored and cultivated, the power of the human agent to live authentically and autonomously celebrated and encouraged. And in large measure reason is honored, autonomy is celebrated. But the prevailing rhetoric is not translated into educational policy. Quite the reverse, the actual trend of developments makes more and more difficult the achievement of promised goals. The Socratic ideal of the examined life gives way to an educational process that rewards academic imperialism, fits individuals to socially needed functional slots, and, by means of paternal manipulation, adapts students for that conformity to the conventional wisdom which a society devoted to consensus and minimal disturbance of the social order requires.

But academic administrators, no more than political leaders, can escape the impact of the dialectic of disorder. Youngsters who are promised one thing, given another, and provided with enough of the intellectual and moral resources to realize that they have been defrauded will, at least occasionally, take it out on the "system." And well they should.

Disraeli's aphorism, "Any man who is not a radical in his twenties lacks a heart, while any man who remains a radical after thirty lacks a head," is, in its application to the United States, only half right. The tragedy of student radicalism is not that it exists, but that it so quickly atrophies. How could it be otherwise? Student radicals have been deprived to the same extent as their more conservative contemporaries of systematic training in the disciplines of reason and of exposure to morally serious models whose notion of "responsibility" does not preclude radical dissent. No group in higher education is more massively victimized than undergraduates—who suffer most from the inverted system of priorities

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that rewards organizational skills more than research, research more than graduate teaching, graduate teaching more than undergraduate teaching, the teaching of undergraduate honor students more than the teaching of those whose need for skilled and dedicated teachers is greatest.

If life in the multiversity is too often fraudulent, it at least provides the increasingly essential passport to the fulfillment of those more material aspirations that American society encourages one to have. Hence, the fact that millions are excluded from the privileges of higher education for economic reasons alone is doubly scandalous. Not only are these persons deprived of even the illusion of participating in what is promised by American rhetoric, they are also excluded from the material opportunities necessary to participate in the reality of commercial success. And even when opportunities are available, inadequate early education deprives millions of others of developing either the motivation or the necessary skills for achieving what is conventionally termed "success" in more advanced schooling.

This is not to deny that the United States is doing better than most in educating youth. But for a nation possessing our resources, today's best is at least a light-year away from being good enough. Thus, we have another American dilemma—bad educational processes, inequitably accessible, rationalized by an almost empty rhetoric of educational ideals.

4. Conditions of Work

Due primarily to industrial organization and the unprecedented period of relative prosperity this nation has enjoyed, since the beginning of World War II, the opportunity to exercise power arbitrarily has greatly diminished in our work-places. This abatement of industrial tyranny is due primarily to the creation of a system of industrial due process that, though far from being comprehensive, does protect most blue- and white-collar workers. This system of due process—and not rising wages and salaries—is trade unionism's major achievement. Ask any fairly sophisticated group of leaders from union locals, as I have done, and they will tell you that this is so.

But if due process is an achievement, and a historic agenda that remains to be completed, there is another problem that has hardly been perceived, let alone attacked. For, though the work place is not the theater of tyrannical exercise of power in its more blatant forms, (e.g. sweat shops, company stores, Pinkertons, brutal foremen, etc. are gradually disappearing) it is the place where life is lived in its most routine, uncreative, spirit-searing—in a word, dehumanized—forms.

In an article in which he brilliantly analyzes the impact of modern industrial conditions on workers, Harvey Swados suggests that until

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

workers acquire control of production standards, the very rules of the industrial game, no matter how impartially applied, will perpetuate and aggravate this dehumanizing aspect of the work process.* (Shades of early Marx.) For the company's primary concern is to increase profits. When wages, fringe benefits, and the more general conditions of work are rigidly prescribed by collective bargaining agreement, the competitive pressures with which the company will normally deal will force management to do one of two things: make technological improvements that eliminate jobs or speed up the work process. The threat of the former gives them a lever by which they can achieve the latter. The imperatives of speed-up require the elimination of all those "frictional" concessions that mitigate efficiency. Moreover, the very existence of due process removes the last reservation the conscientious manager might have about authorizing a speed-up. It actually permits him to treat the worker like a machine, with good conscience. For the worker has his contract and is guaranteed his day in court, should he disagree with the manager's application of its provisions. Doesn't he?

Once again the dialectic of disorder operates with a ruthless impartiality. Unless trade unions take appropriate steps, the day is coming when most strikes will be unofficial and directed not against employers, but against labor leadership itself. For, in the very nature of the case, "responsible" union leadership "must" support employers in their legitimate application of contractual provisions and therefore often assist marginal producers to survive by stretching points in their favor, both during and after negotiations. But the rhetoric of the trade union movement proclaims that the trade union leader is a worker's best friend. Confronted by the gap between that rhetoric and the dehumanized reality of the work process, there will be disorder within the industrial community. And all the decent and respectable members of the professional middle class will decry the "irresponsibility" of the "greedy" workers.

Liberalism's course is clear. It must reinterpret and apply the moral insights of older syndicalist theorists of industrial democracy, like G. D. H. Cole and John Dewey. For in the industrial community, as in the larger political community, protection of human rights requires democratic process.

5. *Legal Justice*

If due process is close to having been realized in that part of industry which is organized, it is far from having been achieved within the formal structures of the law. The legal rights of the poor, of the Negroes,

*Harvey Swados, *The UAW and Walter Reuther*, DISSENT, Autumn 1963.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and of those who profess unpopular political creeds are still too often violated. This comes about partly through unequal administration of existing rules, but more often through the social prejudice that influences the very construction of rules of legal process.

Almost all executions are of persons that come from deprived backgrounds. Indigents rarely get adequate legal counsel; and when they do, they often obtain that counsel after their rights have already been violated in the pre-trial process. The Imbau method of interrogation, now widely used by police, is refined brain-washing. The drawing of juries and grand juries is often so contaminated by racial and social prejudice, that there is little possibility of a fair trial. Standards of mitigation and criminal responsibility all favor the more socially respectable members of the community. And the severity of the sentences that American justices often hand out are an international scandal.

Conditions of penal servitude and rules of legal commitment frequently violate the most basic principles of liberalism. In the guise of *treatment,* the individual's basic right to freedom of choice, with all the fateful consequences for good and ill in his own life and in the life of society, is violated. Reform is alright when the process and aim is the development of the virtues of a free citizen, not when it masks an effort to manipulate the criminal or patient into conformity. In the guise of liberal reform, commitment to mental institutions has become a thoroughly illiberal device for getting obnoxious persons out of sight and under guard.

One is not less a manipulating tyrant if he makes his appearance as warden, psychiatrist, prison guard, hospital attendant, hospital administrator, or social worker. To no social evil is the basic thrust of liberal theory more definite and more important. For if, in the name of abstract justice, morally committed persons will not protect a person to whom family and neighbor are likely to be indifferent, who will?

It is, therefore, not enough to acknowledge real virtues in the existing system of law, or the substantial progress that has been made in the last half century. Liberals must devise means of dealing with the extremely recalcitrant problems that remain.

6. Urban and Rural Life

As antiseptic suburbs grow, and the decay of central cities is accelerated by materialism, exhaust, and rapacious landlords, the natural setting in which the dialectic of disorder can play itself out is created.

The problem of creating a decent physical environment for urban Americans has become so acute that the President has created the Department of Urban Affairs and has proposed a Department of Transpor-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tation. But no administrative gimmick, nor any of the Administration's current proposals for remedying the situation, has any prospect of correcting the basic problem—entrenched property interests that generally have the power to kill any decent measure of reform, and in pursuit of more profits almost invariably exercise that power in ways that subordinate or ignore considerations of aesthetics, health, and morality. Urban renewal is an anodyne that generally benefits middle-income groups more than lower-income people who are displaced by the public projects. Desegregation by law seems only to hasten segregation in fact in urban school districts. And the ugliness of the central city is mitigated only by the central city businessmen's efforts to lure the shopping-center crowd back through "beautification" of their surroundings.

7. *Cumulative Impact*

Liberalism is concerned not only that a person have freedom to do those things he prefers, but that what he prefers result from the fullest possible exposure to the existing range of possibilities. For only then can the freedom to choose in a deliberative way be assured. Only then can we have any reasonable assurance that choice is a fulfillment, and not a waste of a person's power.

Liberals must tread a delicate line between cultural authoritarianism and cultural liberation—but in the name of the latter they must criticize the cultural market-place that so restricts choice that what exists today comes close to being a cultural wasteland. Those who have the time and money, and know where to look, can find the cultural products they are seeking. But most ordinary Americans with relatively educated tastes find that they are discriminated against in a most egregious fashion. Here, as always, commercial criteria conflict sharply with the deliberative and aesthetic criteria that mark the difference between amusement and intensely human experience.

This is not to say that any male with a Ph.D., gonads, and a masculine ego is incapable of enjoying half-nude women and Western bravado very much. But during any given evening, during any given hour, both he and his female counterpart should like at least to have the opportunity to taste aesthetically and intellectually more venturesome fare than is available on radio and television in most places. Yet, in the final analysis, it must be admitted that the debasement of taste in this country is not the primary responsibility of those who presently control the media of mass communication. With the best will in the world, and many active in the mass media have very good will, they are constrained by conditions of the market. Defiance would take greater social and financial courage that is normally allotted to businessmen. These con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ditions are the cumulative product of institutional derangements described in all that has preceded. If an individual's life were rich in other respects, he would normally neither need to escape by consuming debased cultural fare, nor suffer harm or loss if he did. It is against the background of dehumanization from cradle to grave that the provision of special cultural opportunities takes on special importance.

The impact of the conditions I have described on our cultural lives is bad; their cumulative effect on the texture of the whole of American life is disastrous. The gap between rhetoric and reality is so wide, the values actually operative so unrelated to biological, intellectual, and spiritual development in its fullest sense, that an authentically human existence for most Americans is an impossibility. Perhaps most disastrous of all is that the operative criteria of public esteem, on which one's self-esteem and self-respect are so dependent, are sufficiently remote from the rhetoric of morality, intellect, and aesthetics proclaimed on ceremonial occasions, that the very possibility of living a life of integrity is deeply eroded when it is not destroyed. This is the common experience of the sensitive youngsters an older generation does not permit itself to understand fully. Understanding would require these older persons to face the lies that have controlled and impoverished their own lives. An older person can not normally be expected to admit this to himself. For error, persistently pursued, traps the human mind. The more fateful the error, the more complete the entrapment. And so human error normally enlarges itself. The parent who has guided the child mistakenly redoubles his effort to "bring the child to his senses." The President who has guided his nation mistakenly does the same. The fault must be made to lie elsewhere—for sanity's sake.

Our spiritual, educational, and political leaders celebrate "freedom"; but they too often mean "bend your knee to power and consensus." They proclaim "democracy"; but they too often mean submission to the existing structure of corporate power. They call for "honesty, truth, and morality"; but they too often practice deception, hypocrisy, and ruthless violation of the rights of others in "patriotic" pursuit of policy-aims "vital to the national interest." They debase the quality of the democratic process and attribute what they do to "love of country."

Where once the basic power and prerogatives of privileged elites was maintained primarily through more naked exercise of power, reliance is increasingly placed instead on the effort to limit the mind's power rationally to understand public policy. The result is extremism on the Right, and manipulated consensus in the middle.

What can a person of the Left who values authenticity do in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

light of such conditions except grow progressively alienated from our predominantly middle-class culture—and, quite incidentally, grow long finger nails and a beard?

"Be realistic," answer most American liberals.

III. The Politics of Pseudo-Realism

The best statement of this most "realistic solution" I have ever encountered appeared in a student editorial entitled "Students Must Choose Between Politics and Ideals":

> . . . (P)olitics is the art of the possible. This is always a difficult adage for students, largely involved in one sort of political idealism or another, to accept. The "student movement" has lost sight of it. But if students expect to exert influence of any kind in society, they must accept it and realize that if what they want is the "impossible," they must find means outside the established political order to implement it.
>
> Politics must be accepted for what it is—amoral. Students would either have to compromise their ideals in order to participate or forget about participation. There is no reason to assume that student participation in the governmental processes would substantially alter the character of the American government.
>
> Students are double-damned. If they participate in politics, idealism of necessity goes out the window. If they do not enter the larger political sphere, they find that large and vital areas of concern, such as the future of the human race, are outside their scope. They must choose.

Out of the mouths of babes come the deranged teachings of their fathers. The author poses a cruel dilemma. Happily, it is also a false dilemma. To understand why the dilemma is false and why the preferred alternative of political realism is unacceptable, a philosophical exploration of the very bases of political thought and action is required.

From student editorial to Aristotle. The ascent is steep, but the path direct. For Aristotle, the supreme rational conservative, provides the clearest possible statement of realism's vital principle. "We deliberate about things that are in our power and can be done." And that is all we do, or even *can* deliberate about. Aristotle was so deeply committed to this principle that it shaped the very sense "deliberation" had for him. His meaning is clear; even the attempt to determine how to achieve an impossible object is a defect of intellect so gross that the thought processes involved do not merit the name, "deliberation." But two questions must be answered: How is one to determine what is, or is not, impossible? And what is the relationship between the belief that some object is impossible, and the likelihood that it will not be achieved?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The realist's answer to both questions is clear. The facts, scientifically established, reveal what is possible and what is not. The Gradgrind of political life, the realist proclaims ". . . we want nothing but Facts sir, nothing but Facts!" And, as facts are "out there," waiting to be discovered by inquiring intellect, what a man believes to be possible is not relevant to whether or not it is possible.

Aristotle crossed by the spirit of science; what could provide a more respectable intellectual facade for determined opposition to radical chance? Science is a form of life. And like all other forms of life, it is, as Freud once said (and then forgot) governed "by deep-rooted internal prejudices, into whose hands our speculation unwittingly plays." In politics, the rhetoric of science no more guarantees moral rectitude, or even strategic acumen, than the rhetoric of Christian morality guarantees a righteous cause or good heart.

This holds no less for the liberal realist than the conservative realist. The liberal realist's criteria for assessing "the facts," and his very perception of "fact" are unwittingly governed by deep-rooted internal prejudices. He does not consciously betray his liberal commitments. Indeed, he possesses a most ingenious arsenal of defensive forms for masking his betrayal from himself. The two that deserve special mention are role-playing, and the view that politics is an amoral enterprise.

1. Role-Playing and Anticipatory Surrender

The role-player assumes that he is somehow not meeting his obligations as a responsible citizen unless, before making a political judgment, he views matters *as if* he were the official who has the formal power to act. This he does, not simply to understand and sympathize, but because he regards role-playing as required by the dictum that only deliberation about possibilities is warranted. If, from the President's point of view, a certain course of action is impossible, the role-player would think it deeply irresponsible for anyone to press the President to take that action

For example, a really massive War on Poverty, involving expenditures of $100 billion over a five-year period, is under consideration. The role-player asks, "Can he get the legislation through the Congress?" If not, then he concludes that it is irresponsible for liberals to press for such a program.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk recently urged role-playing when considering the Vietnam issue. At a hearing held by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee he advised every American to ask himself, "What would I do about this if I were President of the United States?"—and to make his political judgment on that basis. I can think of no advice which

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reflects a more defective understanding of the nature of responsible citizenship in a democracy.

For the policies endorsed by officials, from President down to the lowest policy-making levels, are almost invariably the product of a great many different, often conflicting, pressures. A person who role-plays by putting himself in the place of men at the center of power, in effect *abandons any effort to make his special concerns and interests a part of the system of pressures that help shape the official's decision.* Hence, members of groups who tend to role-play are, in effect, cancelling any influence on policy they might exert. It is this tendency to role-play that has helped make authentic liberalism an increasingly peripheral force in American politics.

The most direct result of role-playing is *anticipatory surrender* of bargaining points. Since compromise is part of the art of politics, it requires a position forcefully articulated, persistently pressed, there to be compromised. Role-playing that results in anticipatory surrender will prove unrealistic. For the compromises made by officials will then almost inevitably be responsive only to pressures that have *not* been negated by anticipatory surrender—hence, the realists's pseudo-realism.

Rusk's counsel to the American people is the inversion of role-playing by an ordinary citizen. A responsible official who feels himself at the center of a system of forces tugging in different directions, would normally welcome pressures that make it more possible for him to adopt a policy closer to his own, ideal preference. Thus, for example, if the President and his Secretary of State do want to reserve the right to negotiate the form of an interim South Vietnamese government at the bargaining table, they should welcome the proposal made by Senators J. William Fulbright and Robert Kennedy that the National Liberation Front be granted a role in a governing coalition.* For this both increases the uncertainty about American intentions in the minds of the adversary, and gives the Administration greater political freedom to compromise once it does sit down at the negotiating table. The fact that they react as if men like Senators Kennedy and Fulbright are stabbing them in the back will inevitably be interpreted by the adversary as good evidence that America's stated willingness to compromise on meaningful points is phony.

The process of identifying with the predicaments of others does have its uses. For, properly employed, it *increases* a person's political effectiveness by giving him a better sense of just where his limited power may be

*Perhaps they do so privately. But all the evidence seems to indicate that they are more furious with their critics in private than in public.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

most effectively applied. Moreover, it diminishes those blaming-tendencies that so contaminate the capacity for detached political judgment—a vital condition of effectiveness. But empathy as a means of achieving maximum effectiveness should not be confused with role-playing.

2. *The Amorality of Politics*

The liberal realist tends to regard concern for the morality of political judgment and action as mere moralism. He tends to reserve his own invocation of moral principles for ceremonial occasions. In the councils of government, or of party, as journalist, educator, or man of God, he is the first to eschew the relevance of moral principle, the last to measure the propriety of the means in terms of anything other than their effectiveness in relation to "practical" goals. Morality is pertinent only in establishing a general goal as desirable. And in deciding questions of foreign policy, even this degree of morality is impermissable—the sole concern being for the national interest. The practicality of the goal and the effectiveness of means to that end are purely factual matters.

I have heard an ordained Presbyterian minister who happens to be a consultant to the Department of Defense argue that as a Christian he should not obey an order to fire nuclear weapons, but that his moral reservations are irrelevant to matters of policy because they require political, not moral judgment.

The President betrayed a similar tendency when, commenting on recent Vietnam protests, he expressed surprise that "any person would feel toward his country in a way that is not consistent with the national interest."

I can think of no attitude more destructive of a civilized effort to cope with political problems. For these sentiments come out of the mouths, not always of cruel men, but often of morally sensitive officials who are the products of some of the best instruction our moral traditions make available. The attitude leads to an identification of national security with *any* national interest, and then to identification of national prestige with national security. Our young men are then committed to battle in a fruitless effort to forestall genuine social revolution rooted less in ideological commitment than in human misery resulting from decades of neglect and exploitation. The folly is then labelled "patriotism," and dissenters are accused of practicing "neo-isolationism" and "near treason." The path is precipitous and difficult to avoid once one has taken the first fateful step of construing politics as an amoral enterprise. When what the amoral view implies becomes clear, morally sensitive men are either driven into opposition, or go into an acquiescent state of moral shock.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is tempting to criticize the realist's amorality as morally vicious, and to let matters go at that. In fact, even if one grants the amorality of politics, the view generates some of the deepest and most perplexing problems of political philosophy.

For one thing, the factual judgments made in support of political action almost inevitably go beyond the available evidence. This is so for two reasons: First, the amount of evidence that one may theoretically take into account is unlimited. But, more important, in political life, the actual evidence available, is, as a rule, severely limited. Hence, factual judgments are made in conditions of indeterminacy in two different respects. Before developing the implications of the fact indeterminacy that exists for official and ordinary citizen alike, let me illustrate the claims, to fix their meaning more precisely.

Consider the factual judgment, "Communist China is an aggressive nation." What sorts of facts tend to confirm this statement? Well, there are the facts of actual Chinese military actions—against India, against Tibet, against Taiwan, against U.S. forces in Korea, against the off-shore islands. There are facts such as the ideology of revolution Chinese leaders profess. And there are speeches such as the famous one by Marshall Lin Piao. One could go on listing facts that tend to confirm the hypothesis of Chinese military aggressiveness. It is clear, however, that even if the evidence were unambiguous, there is always the possibility that embarrassing facts might turn up which go against the trend of evidence. Thus, many who thought they had enormous evidence for their belief that Russia was unalterably Stalinist in its basic institutional structure, were astonished by Khrushchev's famous denunciation of Stalin. And many others who believed firmly that totalitarian societies are incapable of the creativity and "know-how" to develop advanced technology, were shaken to their toes by Sputnik. Similar surprises may undermine current beliefs about China.

In fact, however, the state of the evidence for the hypothesis of Chinese aggressiveness is not nearly as clear as the catalogue alluded to above would suggest. China experts tell us that China has not, in fact, ever moved against territories with respect to which historic Chinese claims to sovereignty were not substantial. The sole exception is Korea; and there the presence of American military forces within sight of the Manchurian border could reasonably be viewed as an intolerable provocation. Marshall Piao's speech is interpreted differently by those who note that he does, after all, cautiously promise that China will give more vigorous support to wars of national liberation only "when we grow in strength as time goes on . . ."; which suggests that military interven-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion is not in prospect now, unless . . . Moreover it is, after all, China that is encircled; and in the circumstances, a little defensive bellicosity is humanly to be expected. All this goes to prove, not that China is benign, but that the state of the evidence is at best indeterminate.

Given that for major judgments about facts in politics the evidence is almost always going to be incomplete, the beliefs on which a person finally settles are quite inevitably going to be governed "by deep-rooted internal prejudices"—by self-interest and ideological commitment. For if there is a gap between what is known and what is believed, then something besides what is known must have influenced what is believed. To think otherwise is self-deluding, and therefore irrational. Hence, the irony of the realist's position is that by worshiping fact he increases the probability that he will form beliefs irrationally. One who despises and fears Communism will selectively assess the evidence for the claim that China is aggressive, and *leap* to the conclusion that she is incorrigibly aggressive. By the same token, a realist who despises and fears "American imperialism" will selectively assess the evidence for the claim that the controlling principle of American foreign policy is counter-revolution.

The very language of fact is ideologically controlled. Consider the term "aggression." What does it mean? Is one country an aggressor against another when the first supplies training bases, logistical support, finances, armament, munitions, and some manpower to a group of nationals of another country so that they can more effectively fight the established government? Then both American action against Cuba at the time of the Bay of Pigs disaster, and North Vietnamese action against South Vietnam are acts of aggression. But if such support is not sufficient to constitute aggression, if the fighting force is predominantly indigenous to the country in which the fighting is taking place, then neither action constitutes aggression. This is why the United States, *had* to propagate the myth that North Vietnamese were in the South in force prior to its escalation of the war. But how many who believe that North Vietnam is not an aggressor believe that the U.S. was? And how many "patriotic" Americans, who would deny that this country was an aggressor against Cuba, would passionately insist that we must defend the South Vietnamese because they have been the victims of aggression?

I was present one evening when a government official was asked whether he thought Communism was monolithically and unreservedly committed to the promotion of revolution everywhere. He replied, "Of course." Then he hesitated for a moment, and continued, "Except Yugoslavia; and she is not Communist at all." What's in a name? If the name is politically central enough, then an ideologue's most "deep-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rooted internal prejudices" are bound to be in it. And, as there is no ideologue like a blind ideologue, realists, blinded as they are by their worship of fact, are the worst ideologues of all.

Moreover, to the extent that a realist's narrower interests tend to reinforce his fact-worship, he will have a double motive for concealing from himself the epistemological status of his fact judgments. But this is only to restate Marx's theory of class consciousness in an epistemologically relevant, non-ideological way. . .

There is another point to be made here—one that has special appeal to radicals and special pertinence to the realist's maxim that one should pursue only what is possible. Regardless of how scrupulous factual inquiry leading to particular judgments may have been, to be limited in political aspiration to only what one believes can be achieved is more often than not to settle for less than one can achieve. William James made this point insistently and eloquently—and earned much abuse and misunderstanding for his trouble:

> Any philosophy which makes such questions as *What is the ideal type of community?* depend on the question of *What is going to succeed?* must needs fall back on personal belief as one of the ultimate conditions of the truth. For again and again success depends on energy of act, faith in turn on faith that we are right—which faith verifies itself.

I do not want to defend all the epistemological implications of this passage taken literally. What James is *at least* saying is that the likelihood that a goal will be achieved often depends on whether it is believed to be possible. "Faith" in the practicality of an aim is a condition of one's determination to pursue that aim, which is in turn an important condition of successful effort. Hence, the very rejection of a political goal as "impossible" or "impractical" or "unrealistic" tends to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. The difference between what is possible and what is impossible is often the will to believe.

James is suggesting an even more radical thesis—in both senses of the word "radical." He believed that one's very conception of "rationality" in political life, as in any other form of life, is in part shaped by temperament. The contrast between optimistic and pessimistic temperament pervades his work. It was his view that these "temperamental" factors cause the pessimist to reject as irrational risks that the optimist would accept as rational. In the application of this point, to political life at least, James seems to me to be indisputably correct. The radical, necessarily more optimistic about achieving a certain radical goal than the conservative, will tend to regard as a rational aim of political effort the goal which the conservative regards as irrational. But they may

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

arrive at these different judgments on the basis of the same evidence. Not only fact but one's very conception of rationality may be influenced by ideology.

For all these reasons, even if one were to grant the realist's premise that morality ought to be irrelevant to political judgment, this would not make the moral point of view implicit in ideology irrelevant—because it *can not* help but influence political judgment. The realist's dictum is itself a moral maxim that counsels us to accept a psychological impossibility—and it is therefore both unrealistic and a major source of irrationality in politics.

This point has special importance these days to those who proclaim the end of ideology. In the thirties many morally passionate young men were gulled into uncritical endorsement of various forms of Marxist ideology. With an arrogance whose magnificence is often overshadowed only by their egoism, they assume that if it happened to them in the thirties, it is likely to happen to anyone today. Thus, they set themselves up as the moral guardians of the present political generation—warning all against the insidious attractions of the Gods that failed.

The most certain prophylaxis against mistaken commitment is, of course, absence of firm commitment. Hence, they proclaim the dangers of ideological thinking and the virtues of "the politics of the event." On almost every one of the fundamental political issues of our day they tend to reinforce conservatism and reaction in the name of liberalism. They exaggerated the rigidities of the Soviet system under Stalin, eroded the determination to resist McCarthyism, strengthen those who condemn a sensitively moral response to United States adventures in foreign policy, side with those who defend the institutions of the bureaucratically stifling university, exaggerate the "aggressiveness" of Communist China, and so on. But surely the present political generation should not be made to pay for the failures of soured latter-day radicals.

Liberal realists are forever urging that we support government officials—especially if they speak in the idiom of liberalism. For they have access to privileged facts, and they normally do the best they can. Liberal officials do often deserve our understanding and even our compassion. If that is all that is meant by "support," I will not quarrel with the realist. But if he means that these officials also deserve our trust, then the radical liberal should be clear and definite in his reply; *no official ought to be trusted.* Not only do the contaminating epistemological factors described above operate on government officials, who tend more than most to be realists, but there are special reasons for mistrusting officials that have an absolutely decisive cumulative weight.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

With the best liberal will in the world, government officials at the top of the totem pole are necessarily responsive to a system of political pressures that is bound to produce distortion of perception and judgment. A President is duty-bound to be responsive to the concerns expressed by members of the corporate elite, and of the John Birch Society as well as of the poor and of Negroes, if only because he must think of how most effectively to pursue a liberal legislative program. In addition, who can doubt that once a bad decision is made—especially bad decisions that cost vast sums of money and much American blood—it becomes psychologically almost impossible for the officials responsible to admit that they have erred. Kenneth Galbraith put the point that I am generalizing concretely when he wrote:

> Things have been going badly for the United States in South Vietnam for some time and to those of us who have been rougly in touch with the situation the reasons have seemed tolerably clear. The advocates of the wrong policy have been in charge and are deeply committed to their error. When things go wrong, they redouble their efforts, which, inevitably, makes things twice as bad.

Commitment to existing policy, right or wrong, is the highly probable destiny of public officials implicated in the formulation of that policy. To bring the French colonial wars in Indochina and Algeria to an end, there *had* to be a change of leadership.

In Vietnam, Robert McNamara has found his Edsel. At Ford, where profits are the final arbiter of managerial skill, he would undoubtedly have had the good sense to stop production by now. But for a government official, the criteria of success and failure are not so definite. Hence, even if he is a morally sensitive person—perhaps especially if he is a morally sensitive official—he will "redouble" his efforts if only because he cannot honestly face the prospect of conceding that his policy has squandered American lives. The true measure of President Kennedy's quite remarkable capacity for detached political judgment was that he could stop short of the final folly during the Bay of Pigs adventure—and could later admit that he had erred disastrously. But he was capable of the initial folly both there and in Vietnam; and few will deny that the present occupant of the White House, and most other liberal Presidents, have been more apt to display thin skin than cool intellectual judgment in such situations.

As for government officials farther down, consider their predicament. Not only are they constrained to advocate government policy by virtue of the formal definition of their offices, but there are other powerful psychological forces at work. For one thing, they share with key decision-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

makers the necessity of responding to the existing system of political pressures. More important, perhaps, is the fact that advancement in their careers depends on their learning how to play the bureaucratic game—and that means working diligently for a policy even when there is personal disagreement. But, at the same time, like any other human being, such an official needs to maintain his self-respect. If he is forced to advocate a policy of which he disapproves and if he is a person of any integrity the psychic pain that results may be substantial. If the issue is momentous, and the official does not have the will or good sense to resign, then he is likely to make the psychological adjustments required for him truthfully to say that he accepts the offensive policy. And this will be so even if, on the basis of background and past record, it might seem inconceivable that he would. This is undoubtedly a good part of the story of Adlai Stevenson's final tragic months. A man who took as much pride in his record of honest public utterance, and who was as dedicated to the fundamental tasks of the United Nations as Stevenson, must have found it literally impossible either to escape his responsibilities or to defend policies with which he heartily disagreed. For, paradoxically, the Puritan in politics is heavily dependent on the approbation of peers to sustain his dedicated honesty. But how can he expect, or accept, the approbation of those he respects, unless he is capable of respecting himself? And how can he respect himself unless he accepts the policies he is bound to advocate in open council?

Given this impressive system of forces working to distort both the perception and judgment of all public officials, any ordinary citizen does well to view skeptically all who claim to know because they are specially rational or because they have access to privileged information—especially when the decisions involved are those most likely to whip up patriotic passion and the mindless support that results. Indeed, lacking other grounds, the patriotism of a free man in a free society would be sufficient to justify such skepticism.

A wise sovereign would have the intellect and strength of character to recognize this as the proper posture for the good citizen. He would realize not only that power tends to be used to manipulate others, but that it almost inevitably results in self-manipulation. This is why Rusk's advocacy of role-playing and President Johnson's puzzlement that any citizen would "feel toward his country in a way that is not consistent with the national interest" reveal a profoundly defective conception of the nature of democratic citizenship.

How does one protect himself against the ideological contaminations described? The short answer is, "not possible." But if complete freedom

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is out of the question, one can still progressively push back the boundaries of ideological bondage by acquiring the habit of reason and of Socratic self-examination; that is, by a life-long educational experience that embodies precisely the features of the liberal conception of education previously described. For if one is going to be ideological in any event, the rational thing to do is to recognize it in order both to reduce its power of contamination, and to exploit its possibilities—a much more sensible thing to do than to conduct spurious and self-deceiving polemics against ideological thinking.

And this brings me to the most basic objection one can make to the politics of pseudo-realism. Up to this point the assumption that politics is an amoral enterprise has not been challenged in detail. But the very fact that for most of us moral considerations are embodied in the ideological perspectives that shape even our judgments of fact implies that it is "unrealistic" to suppose that politics ever could be completely amoral. Still, the realist might insist that one should be as amoral as possible; that, so to speak, he should engage in strenuous moral exercise on Sunday morning, but during political hours, he should engage in strenuous amoral exercise.

The first thing that is wrong with this counsel is that it is schizophrenic, resulting in a destructive lack of authenticity. Even if it were possible, it would be painfully inconvenient. A person cannot be moral in one sphere and amoral in another without becoming self-alienated. For this reason alone, the suggestion is profoundly illiberal in spirit and application. It destroys the possibility of the ideal that lies at the heart of liberalism: self-development.

Beyond this consideration, the idea that moral principles are irrelevant to the assessment of the means to desirable ends is morally vicious. It is moral Stalinism—the view that considerations of justice are irrelevant to the means adopted. There may be times when the ends pursued are of such overwhelming importance that considerations of justice may legitimately be overridden—for example, a situation in which national survival is literally at stake. But even in such a case, the principles of justice are relevant, and must *be overridden*. In most ordinary political contexts, the desirable aim does not have such supervening importance. For example, there are those who do not hesitate to rally Negroes to a civil rights cause by manipulating them, "for their own good," with lies and racial rhetoric. In so doing, the manipulator simply subjects to indignity those he professes to rescue from indignity. For, more than anything else, the respect due others requires respect for powers of mind and spirit.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the making of foreign policy, the idea that morality is irrelevant is more complex because it has a certain Hobbesian plausability. The Hobbesian view is that as politically sovereign societies are not governed by laws, they exist in "a state of nature" that precludes morality because it is psychologically impossible for persons to act morally. There are, as a friend once put it, few "wanderers among nations." Therefore, the ultimate test of the propriety of policy is its contribution to national interest.

The argument is unsound, however, for two reasons. First, the conception of "national interest" is a blank check upon which one inscribes any interest, including moral interests, that are important. Therefore, foreign policy is going to be controlled by ideological considerations in any event. But second, even granting that wanderers among nations are not plentiful, they do occur—and the aim of liberal policy should be to increase their number. Here, if anywhere, James's claim that what is possible is a function of what is believed to be possible has decisive application.

The foregoing analysis makes it easy to understand why the liberal realist tends to favor an exclusively countervailing conception of democracy. He aims to get things done—to be effective. He wants the facts about how one gets things done. The facts confirm what the emphasis on effectiveness suggests—that gaining and managing power is the central problem of political life. The amoral character of the realist's judgment reinforces what exclusive preoccupation with power encourages—a dulling of one's concern about the quality of the process by which power is secured and managed.

The liberal realist favors political democracy over all competing systems for three reasons: it is the process which most efficaciously secures social stability, the general welfare, and human rights. (Note: liberal realists who are deeply concerned about securing human rights as a policy objective are often too quick to violate them in the process if that is what effective action requires.)

The emphasis on stability and general welfare are interdependent. Stability is achieved through a process by which the maximum number of human preferences are satisfied. But through satisfaction of preferences general welfare is cumulatively secured. It is no accident, therefore, that the most influential theorists of the countervailing power conception of democracy in recent years have been economists—parrticularly Joseph Schumpeter. For the countervailing conception of democracy is modeled on the economists' market-place. It is a process whereby the voter (the consumer) shops around for the commodities (candidates and policies)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that best satisfy his preferences (interests). By giving his business to one firm (political party) rather than to its competitors, he enables that firm better to gain profit (office, patronage, status) and power. The competing firms try to induce consumers to stop buying the competitor's products, and to buy their own. This they may do by offering different products which they claim to be of higher quality, by inventing new products (new policies), or by lowering the price they charge for the same products (lowering taxes). This competitive process is very practical; very realistic; very amoral. But, as in any market-economy, there are many competitive frictions. These exact a long-term moral and aesthetic cost which is unanticipated and enormous. Most importantly, the process is intrinsically destructive of rights and of the opportunities to develop the capacities for good citizenship in the most liberal sense of that expression.

The "realism" of the market is buttressed by a "realistic" assessment of human nature. The countervailing power theorist may, like Schumpeter, claim that it is the best way to counteract man's irrational tendencies. Or, like Reinhold Niebuhr, he may proclaim that man is born in sin, and that the countervailing power process is the surest antidote to original depravity.

All the criticisms of pseudo-realism already developed apply to exclusive reliance on a democracy of countervailing power. Preoccupation with power is ideologically influenced. The democratic process prescribed is immoral because it squanders human rights and potentialities. It is self-defeating because it undermines the very conditions of deliberative citizenship. It is unrealistic because it is the worst possible way to ensure that political leadership will have the "managerial skills" necessary to function most effectively in pursuit of liberal aims. But basically, its pessimistic cast is self-fulfilling. By diminishing liberalism's political reach, it forfeits many liberal aims that are within liberalism's grasp. In the end, Freud's principle fully applies to those who place exclusive reliance on the countervailing power conception. Each such individual is governed by deep-rooted internal prejudices into whose hands his practicality unwittingly plays.

IV. The Politics of Self-Indulgence

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. attributes the Bay of Pigs disaster partly to the fact that President Kennedy's liberal advisors were trying desperately to prove that they were really tough guys, and not soft-headed idealists.* What does an authentic liberal do when liberalism is perverted in this

A Thousand Days, p. 256.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

way by powerful men who are regarded as liberals? What does he do once he fully acknowledges the enormous gap between the promises of American rhetoric and the reality of American society? What does he do when it becomes obvious that many who talk in the idiom of "political effectiveness" are really trying to disguise self-serving pursuit of personal ambition? What does he do in order to avoid absorption by the agencies of "the Establishment" that seem to know how to defer to the existing structures of power better than to anything else? One thing he may do is purchase immunity from the sickness of pseudo-realism by forgoing any prospect of effective political action. He can repudiate the system that breeds and sustains the evils he despises. Unfortunately, in rejecting the system he also forfeits access to institutional resources which he must control if liberal ideals are to be effectively pursued. Thus, he sacrifices the prospects of political success for the sake of his soul. He practices the politics of self-indulgence.

When one prominent liberal, sickened by the Administration's Vietnam policy, decided to resign from the Democratic party, he justified himself in the following terms:

> The major issue in most of the criticisms of my letter to the President has been whether leaving the Democratic party makes political sense.
>
> Of course it does not. Anyone wanting to exert maximum political leverage would stay in the party, organize dissenting precinct leaders and district leaders, and see that their protest appeared in newspaper columns and advertisement and, if possible, on the desk of the President himself. This is the kind of politics to which the President responds. *If I were of a different temperament I would have done just that.* [My emphasis.]*

What interests me here is not the action itself: in balance, it may have been the right thing to do. What interests me is this liberal's implicit assumption that the indulgence of his peculiar temperament is a justification *in itself*. Others go a bit farther. They proclaim that their predominant concern is to achieve "personal authenticity." They also condemn as "finks" liberals who refuse to participate in their projects of protest when those projects seem ineffective or counter-productive. But—and this is my central point—between "finkdom" and violent revolution there may be only the career of noisy impotence, despair, and eventual absorption by the hated "establishment."

Many of those who practice the politics of self-indulgence are young men and women who join "the Movement" and thereby become members of the "New Left." Not all of those who act self-indulgently are to be found in the Movement; nor do all members of that movement prac-

*W. H. Ferry, "The Brutalization of Violence," *Liberation*, October 1965.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tice the politics of self-indulgence. I am abstracting a recognizable tendency that expresses itself to a significant extent in the political activity of many American liberals. They may not call themselves "liberals," nor even think of themselves as liberals. But they are committed to liberal ideals as I have described them; and that is what counts. In a brilliant essay, Irving Howe described those who practice the politics of self-indulgence as making "of their radicalism not a politics of common action, which would require the inclusion of saints, sinners, and ordinary folk, but rather a gesture of moral rectitude."* Much of what I have to say recapitulates Howe's argument; but it is important to view this form of political life from the perspective of radical-liberalism.

Those who practice the politics of self-indulgence are the moral victims of the dialectic of disorder. Many are Negroes whose souls are sickened by the sand-bagging moderation that passes for responsible citizenship. Many come from middle-class backgrounds where they have been daily witnesses to the corrupting insincerity of the lives led by their parents. Most have been subjected to what passes for education in our multiversities. All are fed up with the self-deception and hypocrisy of those who practice pseudo-realism.

They are properly suspicious of people who talk in the idiom of effectiveness—for the stress on effectiveness is too often a cover for the comforts of quiescence and the preoccupation with a pursuit of successful careers. They refuse to succumb to red-baiting, and are rightly contemptuous of those who try to dismiss them by labelling them "Stalinoid."

They despise Stalinism and all its works. Which is, indeed, why they react with moral outrage to the double standard of those liberal realists who advocate the defense of "freedom" by means that are often not very different from those Stalin employed in Russia. (Yet they, too, often slip into Stalinist grooves when they proclaim their admiration for revolutionary excesses on the grounds that revolution does not, after all, occur "in a velvet box"—a point developed subsequently.)

They are appalled by the failures and distortions of democracy in this country. They are deeply committed to the proposition that those who are vitally affected by large decisions have a right to participate in making those decisions in ways more meaningful than an occasional vote. And so they advocate a democracy of participation, hearkening back to the Jeffersonian tradition of direct participation that has existed since the birth of the Republic as an unrealized part of the rhetoric of Americanism while the Madisonian tradition of coalition politics has

* "New Styles in Leftism," DISSENT, Summer 1965.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

triumphed. So, also, they move into the ghettoes, the slums, and the rural areas of the South, to work directly with those who have been bypassed by American affluence. Their aspiration is to induce those with whom they work to take firmer control of their own destinies so that the tides of modernity will no longer pass over or engulf them.

Oppressed by the pervasive hypocrisy of American society, smothered by the institutional acquisitiveness of established interests, tyrannized by the benevolent paternalism of academic administrators; dirtied by the philistinism and ugliness of the prevailing American culture (how much better to be dirty on the outside and clean on the inside, then the reverse); stultified by the mindlessness of the realists who purvey what passes for social wisdom; oppressed by the manipulativeness of those who pursue the Great Society; they are propelled into a desperate pursuit of authenticity that requires, for the younger radicals, generational mistrust. The worst cut of all is that private virtue, an exemplary life of absolute middle-class integrity, is not only consistent with, but often the very vehicle of public vice.

Their search takes them out of the mainstream and into the murkier tributaries of American life. Hence, many try to find their freedom in practices that shock conventional morality; in sexual abandon, filthy speech, LSD and marijuana clubs; beards and dirt; but also in song, poetry, and art; in the theatre of the absurd, as if its absurdity could mitigate the absurdity of their own lives; but, more than anything else, in political action and protest. For if there are dragons to be slain, one has to go to where the action is. This, at least, is what they have learned since the era of Salinger. Those liberals who currently use the "Beatniks" and the "Veatniks" as whipping posts should remember that those they abuse are not just talking freedom; they are trying to live freely.

The civil rights struggle provided a remarkable opportunity to combine the search for authenticity with effective acts of protest. For a variety of reasons, direct action has proved to be an immensely successful means of forcing the pace and nature of civil rights reform. The relative clarity of the moral issues, the large proportion of the population directly involved, the vulnerability of local officials, the exclusion of Southern Negroes from even a formal role in the governing processes, the unconstitutionality of many state and local statutes, the extent to which the civil rights movement has been able to neutralize the Communist issue—all these factors have combined to enable those most committed to less conventional forms of political action to achieve significant success. Unfortunately, the same set of favorable circumstances that has made it possible to be both "authentic" and effective in the fight for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

civil rights does not occur in every sphere in which the struggle for social justice is carried on—and is, perhaps, disappearing fast even in civil rights. The casual ways in which civil rights tactics have been employed in opposing American foreign policies have, in balance, especially retarded the effort to force liberal change—a point I will develop in more detail in the final section of this essay.

Although the strength of their feelings, the legitimacy of their moral concerns, and their desire to do something effective should lead them to vigorous intervention in the normal political process, many members of "the Movement" have grown impatient with the calculations and compromises that effective participation in that process imposes. They are, as I have said, too often concerned more with the state of their souls than with the preferences and welfare of those they aim to help. They are too often unwilling to act in ways they regard as inauthentic for the sake of a greater prospect of definite results.

Their acts are self-indulgent first, because even if loss of authenticity were the inevitable result of the calculation and compromise that effective action requires, damage to one's self ought to be balanced against the resulting sacrifices imposed on others. For the middle-class children of middle-class parents have somewhere else to go if they fail. But where do the oppressed of Vietnam or the inhabitants of Tent City in Lowndes County, Alabama, have to go? Too often the well-educated scions of prosperous families are prepared to fight for human rights to the last indigent before beating their perilous way back to lucrative professional careers.

Second, the politics described is self-indulgent because the definition of authenticity endorsed is spurious. The notion that authenticity requires that one forgo calculation and compromise is perverse. I have many reasons for claiming that this is so.

First, many of those who justify their actions on grounds of personal authenticity mask their ineffectiveness, even from themselves, by adopting Leninist rhetoric without participating in Leninist revolutionary aims—and I mean *violent* revolution. They subject the system they repudiate to an abusive, hammer attack that inspires the converted and alienates everyone else. Hence, like those liberals they so bitterly criticize, members of the Movement create a gap between their own rhetoric and their social reality. To the extent that this is so, they are at least as insincere as those they condemn. Worse—they are ineffectual.

Given this basic insincerity, they could close the gap by becoming revolutionary in fact, as well as in word. But they won't. They are too middle-class in sentiment and aspiration. They have too much bourgeois

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ideology in their system. Their very disaffection is proof of the fact—for it is a disaffection rooted in their serious acceptance of liberal ideals. Nor is their commitment to bourgeois values a fault. For the test of the validity of any value is not its social origin. If certain bourgeois values are also the values of a civilized humanism, then let us make the most of them. Failure to make this discrimination is an intellectual fault.

Moreover, they know very well that revolution would not only fail, but the attempt would cause incalculably more harm than good. For all its defects, American society is progressive in the perspective of history. Emanuel Geltman and Stanley Plastrik put the point precisely:

> Legislation must be implemented by enforcement and education. Meanwhile we must distinguish between what we have lost and what we have won, and that means learning to recognize what we have won. Inadequate as much of the legislation seems, our perception of its inadequacy rests upon the advances which it embodies. It is downright silly to maintain that nothing has been achieved. Who will tell that to an auto worker who remembers the Ford plant thirty years ago? Or Mrs. Parks?*

It is not only what has been won that counts. What has been won is due to the genius with which America's powerful and privileged elites have, since the Civil War, been able to buy off discontent through peripheral remedy of grievances. Yet enough peripheral movement equals substantial social change. This is but the reflection in institutional development of coalition politics at work. The fact that an overwhelming majority of Americans prefer what they have, with all its defects, to what revolution would bring is not only the curse but the triumph of the American system so ingeniously designed by James Madison and his cohorts more than two centuries ago. Members of the Movement may not be willing to say it. But that does not matter. The fact is, *they know it.* And so they insincerely draw back from their rhetoric without yet being able to accept their reality.

But there is an area in which they can match deed to rhetoric—in foreign policy. For it is not they who must make the revolution in Cuba, South Africa, or Vietnam. And so they can and do proclaim the ideals of liberal humanism and at the same time proclaim, as did one SDS leader, that "revolutions do not take place in velvet boxes." In this way they try to answer those liberal critics who refuse to condone the terror and the tyranny that oppressed people or the elites who lead them perpetrate in trying to rid themselves of their chains. Or they persuasively define the word "terror" and proclaim that the terror committed is all our own. But this is only to abuse both mind and sensibility. For

*"The Politics of Coalition," *The Radical Papers,* p. 375.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they resort to *non sequitur* in a demagogic effort to win more support for a cause than the cause morally deserves.

The inauthenticity of members of "the Movement" is evidenced in still another way. They rely for support on the "finks" they abuse. And they usually get the support that saves them from their folly. But when that support is not enough to prevent penalty, they are inappropriately shocked and dismayed—"inappropriately," because if they believed what they say when they abuse the "finks," they should find support astonishing, and its failure only to be expected. When they succeed in gaining effective support from liberal "finks," they like to think that it is the result of clever manipulations. It is inconceivable to them that those who defend their rights act out of genuine moral commitment rather than bad conscience. (At that, even bad conscience reflects commitment—if less than the "pure" motivation to which many members of the Movement aspire.)

Which brings me to still another form of inauthenticity. The very persons, who proclaim their absolute and undying commitment to a non-manipulative democracy of participation, too often employ the opportunities such a system affords in manipulative and undemocratic ways. Charismatic leaders declare charisma non-existent—but, all the same, use it to gain their ends. Like the mentors they despise, they profess what they do not practice. Here again, the defect is one of intellect—in two respects. They confuse mere involvement with a democracy of participation by means of which the growth of powers of mind and spirit are encouraged. And they lack the power to discriminate when they fall short in their own conduct of their own ideal aspiration.

Finally, it must be said that some who justify their predilection for dramatic protest in terms of authenticity are really masking from themselves their unwillingness to commit themselves to sustained political involvement. A dramatic flare-up involves a major commitment for a *limited period.* Thus conscience can be appeased at little cost in time and effort. This is both spiritually uplifting and comfortable if one has ambitions that pull in other directions.

But most of those who practice the politics of self-indulgence are at the other extreme. They have a capacity for sustained political involvement that does not normally need to be reinforced by the more conventional political rewards—power and prestige, office and income. This energy for work is in rather scarce supply in this country. When it occurs, it is to be valued—no matter how it happens to be packaged. For the indispensable condition of achievement is, under any and all conditions, the willingness to work.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Moreover, it is impossible to deny that those who are willing to give unstintingly also make other contributions. They are often the initiators of action. They have a political rhetoric of their own which generates new aspirations, new frustrations, new and creative forms of political movement and public policy. From their ranks emerge the poets, and the martyrs of change. Their very passion for authenticity, however defectively expressed in specific situations, is a model and an inspiration.

But to be an inspiration is one thing; to be effective in the long run, quite another. For that kind of success, something more substantial than moral passion, romantic exuberance, and unstinting effort is required. What is needed is a new breed of indefatigable radicals, passionately moral, yes—but also coldly calculating and unfailingly energetic in pursuit of liberal goals. As John Fisher has recently put it: "What this country needs is radicals who will stay that way—regardless of the creeping years, the inevitable blunders, defeats, and combat fatigue."* Will the young men and women of "the Movement" pass that test? Not unless they come to realize that they are destined to despair—and that that despair will turn to quiescence or be converted into Madison Avenue cynicism and ambition—unless they acquire disciplines of reason in the same measure that they already possess moral concern.

V. The Alternative: The Politics of Radical Pressure

Radical-liberals have two fundamental tasks: to translate their theoretical principles and aims into concrete programs, and to develop a strategic concept that has as many of the strengths and as few of the weaknesses of the two deranged political styles as possible. In this section I undertake to define the second of these tasks.

It is not enough to be concerned only with the effectiveness of a strategy. A political process is not just a means of implementing political programs. The process itself has an impact on participants that may speed or retard achievement of the values liberals cherish. The central claim of John Dewey's philosophy was that the democratic process could enrich the lives of men, not only by what it does *for* them, but by what it does *to* them. In the following passage from his book, *The Public and Its Problems,* Dewey expresses the point with prophetic eloquence:

> We have but touched lightly and in passing upon the conditions which must be fulfilled if the Great Society is to become a Great Community; a society in which the ever-expanding and intricately ramifying conse-

Harper's Magazine, March 1966, p. 28.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> quences of associated activities shall be known in the full sense of that word, so that an organized, articulate Public comes into being. The highest and most difficult kind of inquiry and a subtle, delicate, vivid, and responsive art of communication must take possession of the physical machinery of transmission and circulation and breathe life into it. When the machine age has thus perfected its machinery it will be a means of life and not its despotic master. Democracy will come into its own, for democracy is a name for a life of free and enriching communion. It had its seer in Walt Whitman. It will have its consummation when free social inquiry is indissolubly wedded to the art of full and moving communication.

The point crystallized by Dewey's remarks is that an adequate conception of liberal strategy must be based on an adequate conception of liberal democracy. Effective pursuit of legislative programs is normally purchased at a price higher than liberals need to pay if the political processes adopted do little to improve in mind and spirit those who participate and those who are affected; if the accepted conception of democracy does not promote the fullest possible range of liberal values.

The set of values that democracy ought to promote has been an issue on which many of the arguments in preceding sections have turned. I want now to tie the threads of those discussions together; and by describing six functions democracy ought to serve, to provide a theoretical solvent for the two contrasting conceptions of democracy—participatory and countervailing power democracy—that figure so importantly in current debate among liberals.

i. Democracy should reinforce the stabilizing institutions of a society. There are times in the life of a society when the imperatives of order must be rejected in favor of violent revolution. But normally democracy functions as a means of expressing grievances and interests in ways that reduce the general level of discontent, and thereby diminish pressures for redress of grievance through the use of force. This is the first and minimal goal of democratic organization—but, for that very reason, the least distinctive of its functions. The concern for stability is a social virtue only to the extent that it facilitates definite and substantial progress toward liberal goals; not when it is a thinly disguised excuse for sand-bagging realistic pursuit of those ends.

ii. One of these goals is the protection of rights. A democratic system should be organized so that freedoms essential to equal development of human potentialities are securely protected. No other tradition has been as steady and relentless in its *theoretical* repudiation of tyrannical power. But, for that very reason, the gap between liberal theory and liberal practice is a special disaster.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

iii. Generally the maintenance of order and the protection of rights requires that human preferences be satisfied. In this way a sufficient number of grievances are eliminated before distress reaches dangerous proportions. The satisfaction of existing human preferences does not, however, always promote the conditions of personal self-development. For men do not always know what is best for them. Yet, if vulgar democrats mistakenly suppose that the voice of the people is the voice of God, the mistake that theorists of aristocracy or meritocracy make is in supposing that anyone else can be given power undemocratically because he is presumed to know better. First, it is notoriously difficult to establish criteria for such knowledge. Second, who can better guarantee that a leader who has the knowledge will use it wisely except the people who must suffer or enjoy the consequences of his social policies? But subjection of leadership to the will of the people implies that satisfaction of existing preferences will generally be pursued. For these reasons, the promotion of general welfare through satisfaction of existing preferences is, with all its dangers, an essential goal of liberalism—and an important function of democracy.

iv. One of the special rights liberals cherish is the freedom of persons to participate in the making of those social policies that vitally affect their destinies. In this respect there is not even a theoretical alternative to democratic process. The satisfaction of this function should be an intrinsic virtue of that process.

v. Intimately related to the right of participation is the liberal concern that the virtues of responsible citizenship be developed in the largest possible number of people. This primarily means that the citizen's respect for the traditions of reason and for his own capacities should be encouraged. Democracy is defective to the extent that it is not constituted by processes that serve this function. If, as Dewey claimed, a by-product is "enriching communion," all the better.

vi. Wise political leadership is an essential condition of right policy in any and all conditions. The central mistake of anti-democratic theorists is not their stress on the importance of leadership, but their belief that effective leadership requires dictatorial or total power. The liberal insists that good leadership is at least as much a matter of being able to influence the course of events through reasoned persuasion as it is the shaping of destinies by manipulating people and power. Effective leadership depends at least as much on the kind of sensitivity to human needs and preferences produced by the processes of direct and mutually respectful involvement with those led as it does upon technical expertise.

Against the background of this catalogue of the functions of democ-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

racy, the conflict, though not the tension, between the theorists of a countervailing, or coalition conception of democracy, and the theorists of a democracy of participation, disappears. For *both* are essential, but in different funtional respects. This is what I aim to show in this section.

James Madison was the great theorist of a democracy of countervailing coalitions. Never in history has an emerging institutional process conformed as closely to design as the American political process has to the system he envisioned, especially in his *Federalist Paper #10.* Jean Jacques Rousseau, though less prophetic, holds a similar place of pride among theorists of participatory democracy.

In his book, *The Social Contract,* Rousseau held that only in a small-scale democracy of participation can both justice and rational public policy be secured. In particular, he believed that once a society adopts a representative system of government, one may "give over the state for lost." Madison argued that Rousseau's form of "pure democracy" will inevitably degenerate into anarchy and tyranny; that only a system of countervailing coalitions buttressed by what he called "auxiliary precautions" can protect individual rights, especially property rights, and maintain social stability.

In the argument that follows I try to show, by means of a dialectical modification of both the Madisonian and Rousseauian positions, how one can arrive at a view that satisfies the six functional requirements stated previously; a conception of democracy that promotes the fullest range of liberal values by encouraging creative tension between the processes the two men advocated.

A Madisonian might initially insist that the Rousseauian is a romantic, and somewhat reactionary, visionary. He might claim that the possibility of small-scale democracies of participation ended when industrialization made city-states the size of Athens and Geneva impossible. The Rousseauian, he might claim, talks in the idiom of the radical, but in fact fights modernity. The only thing direct democracy will ever bring about is anarchy and consequent tyranny. It is not, he might continue, even necessary to retell Thucydides' story. Consider what happened to the industrial Soviets established during the early years of the Bolshevik Revolution. It didn't take Lenin very long to realize that, contrary to what Marx prophesied and what Lenin himself hoped for, this experiment in participatory democracy was a disaster. He might claim that Lenin's misbegotten experiment paved the way for Stalinist tyranny. "Be realistic," he might urge. "Work within the framework of coalition politics that has proved, not perfect, but the best political process human beings have been able to devise."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Rousseauian could reasonably admit that *The Social Contract* cannot be applied as it was written. Too much has happened since the middle of the 18th century. But, he might go on to deny that Rousseau's central assumptions, suitably applied to modern industrial conditions, are irrelevant or unimportant. Rousseau, it is true, was wrong to claim that, once representative institutions are permitted, the state is lost. Nevertheless, unless a system of coalition politics is invigorated by participatory institutions, important values are needlessly forfeited, the prospect of urgently needed radical reform is destroyed and, equally important, the prospect of improving the quality of the processes of coalition politics is severely limited.

To this the Madisonian might reply that the only system that can insure stable social conditions, provide adequate protection against tyrannical abuse of human rights, and maximize social welfare is a politics of countervailing power. By dispersing power through a nation vast in population and geographic extent, and by guaranteeing to a sufficiently large portion of that population the vote, the ruling coalitions that emerge are rendered inherently unstable. Frequent elections give the "outs" an opportunity to attract, by means of new programs, the factions peripheral to the ruling coalition. Auxiliary protections like the Supreme Court and the federal system itself provide additional brakes on tyrannical abuse of power. Each faction will associate itself with others for limited purposes of mutual benefit. When the particular purposes of any of these factions are achieved, they will go fishing in different political waters. Except for the Civil War, which was due to the rigidities created by the "peculiar institution" of slavery and the unnatural economic homogeneity of different regions of the country, the system has worked well as a means of maintaining stability, and tolerably well as a barrier to violation of human rights.

The Rousseauian could retort that the Madisonian has missed his point. He no longer denies the strengths imputed to the Madisonian system; but the Madisonian should not, in turn, overlook the intrinsic value as well as the necessary corrective supplied by participatory democracy. Most Madisonians, being economically well off and high in status, rarely calculate the human price that is paid for the kind of stability and progress they cherish. The total product may be increasing, but it is not being distributed equally. General welfare is not equal welfare. The fact that almost a third of the people of the United States hardly participate in our vaunted affluence is not a historical accident, but is due to the system's chronic defects. Political leadership is almost all drawn from the prosperous classes. Madison thought that wealthy people would be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more likely than others to be men of light and learning. But his assumption has proved to be a piece of class prejudice. Some rights are, from the Madisonian point of view, more equal than others—particularly property rights. And this is not acceptable to a radical-liberal. Moreover, consider the gratingly slow processes by which grievances are remedied in a Madisonian system. This can be mitigated by more intimate decision-making structures. Even granting that the system of countervailing coalitions is, in balance, an engine for progress—one must consider the frictional factors that grind living people down. The Madisonian is too inclined to tolerate almost any human price for stability and protection of property rights—provided it is "only" those most oppressed by the system who are required to pay that price. The high casualty rates among Negroes in our "defense of freedom" in Vietnam is just the latest and most dramatic example of what this means in human terms. But worst of all is the way in which the Madisonian system causes policy to gravitate toward a political consensus based on accidental configurations of factional interests rather than reason and morality.

The man in the White House says, "Come let us reason together." But radical-liberals know that too often he really means, "Come, let me manipulate you." Increasingly, powerful leaders work their will by relying on the manipulative arts and the mindlessness of citizens and legislators. A democracy of participation would be one way, perhaps the most important, in which a broader spectrum of the population can be educated in the virtues of responsible citizenship, and thus inoculated against the unreason of the manipulators. At the same time, it will make more likely the emergence of political leadership from a strata of the population who presently depend too often upon the patricians of American politics to fight their political battles. But beyond both these advantages, ordinary people simply have the right to participate more fully in the policy decisions that vitally affect their lives.

The Madisonian might shift his ground a bit, and accuse the Rousseauian of endorsing what Bayard Rustin has called a "no-win tendency." In his article "From Protest to Politics?"* Rustin wrote:

> My quarrel with the "no-win" tendency in the civil rights movement [Rustin would have the same quarrel with the 'no-win' tendencies on the "New Left" generally] parallels my quarrel with the moderates outside the movement. As the latter lack the vision or will for fundamental change, the former lack a realistic strategy for achieving it. For such a strategy they substitute militancy. But militancy is a matter of posture and volume, not of effect.

*Reprinted in *The Radical Papers*, p. 342.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His conclusion is based on recognition that "the Negro today finds himself stymied by obstacles of far greater magnitude than the legal barriers he was attacking before: automation, urban decay, *de facto* school segregation." He argues that these defects are much more deeply rooted in our socio-economic order than the legal props to segregation. They are the result of a total societal failure to meet, not just the needs of Negroes, but human needs generally.

Now how do you cope with these larger problems effectively, except by finding allies among others who either oppose the system or who, because they are injured by it, are potential opponents? A coalition of Negroes, liberals, students, labor, migrant farmers, Mexicans, poor "white trash," Puerto Ricans, and anyone else who does not or should not like the way things are, organized in mutually advantageous ways, stands some prospect of success. In other words Rustin advocates that the political resources of the existing Madisonian system be used as effectively as possible. Though it may be personally satisfying to indulge one's preference for acts of direct political involvement—whether building structures of communal participation or protest—to do this to the exclusion of participation in coalition politics will be self-defeating in the long run.

Unless one is self-deceived by revolutionary rhetoric, it is impossible to deny the cogency of Rustin's argument. The Rousseauian may admit as much; yet he may also deny any suggestion that Rustin's position either precludes or makes unimportant efforts to create participatory institutions. (Nor does Rustin suppose otherwise.)

For, though interested in a "win" policy as much as Rustin, the Rousseauian would want to make sure that our definition of what it is to "win" is not restricted to the implementation of a legislative program. There are things that the very process of *trying to win* can do to people. If they participate in an increasingly deliberative process, they can develop their powers of mind and spirit.* And, as suggested before, unless such a process is encouraged, the prospects of winning even legislative reform are impaired.

A citizenry involved is more likely to become interested and politically motivated than persons who are encouraged only to cast a biennial vote. By being thrown into situations in which they must think, not just about the relative merits of candidates, but about the policies themselves, they are more likely to acquire the knowledge, the sense of relevance, and the skills of the mind to persist more resolutely and more thought-

*To some extent this is what concerns the young militants of SNCC. Acutely aware that Negroes of the black belt have been deprived of self-confidence and self-esteem by their virtual bondage, SNCC views participation as an important remedy. They regard coalition politics as a means of perpetuating spiritual entrapment.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fully in the fight for programs that will be more than a welfare-tinted anodyne for distress caused by massive need. And they will be more likely to produce a leadership from their own ranks that cannot be bought off.

Rustin's argument is correct as far as it goes—but it doesn't go far enough. Coalition politics can be effective without being as effective as possible.

At this point the Madisonian should be prepared to concede a great deal to the Rousseauian. He would, if he is honest and liberal, have to concede that, for many Americans, things have worked out badly. He would also have to admit that he was wrong in stressing stability and the protection of rights, especially property rights, to the exclusion of so much else. But he may still be distressed by the Rousseauian's tendency to think of the countervailing form of coalition politics solely in terms of effectiveness, reserving all the *moral* virtues for participatory democracy. Even from the Rousseauian's point of view, the system of coalition politics has some advantages that go beyond the question of mere effectiveness.

For one thing, it provides a larger framework of forces and interests that inhibits the provincialism and factionalism that so often contaminate deliberations within more intimately organized political structures.

For another, whatever is achieved through the politics of countervailing power promotes the values that result from participatory democracy by strengthening the motive to participate. Romantic exuberance is fine, but unless it is sustained by occasional success at the more general policy levels, enthusiasm will soon evaporate. Morale and motive cannot be sustained by the intensity of initial commitment alone.

Moreover, the system of countervailing powers does provide that degree of protection from interference by corporate powers, public and private, that is essential to the functioning of participatory institutions. And it also creates that floor of material benefits that the maligned welfare state affords; and without which a democracy of participation will not last for very long. One can, for example, deplore the inadequacies of the Poverty Program, but it is indirectly subsidizing a lot of the activity that the Rousseauian favors. And, even if this were not so, persons who face the prospect of actual starvation will have neither the time nor the inclination to engage in "participatory deliberations."

Finally, no matter how much the conservative preoccupation with stability and order is impugned, in a less ideological moment the Rousseauian will have to admit that a degree of stability and order are conditions without which the growth of a deliberative democracy of participation would be an impossibility.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But it is important to be clear that stability and order are to be understood in a way that permits political conflict, dissent, protest, and radical change. They are, by implication, to be understood in a way that makes them compatible with forms of political action that conservatives, quick on the verbal draw, are inclined to regard as "disorderly processes." Above all, the stabilizing processes of a society should not only permit, but should actively encourge reasoned scrutiny and criticism of its most sacred institutions and beliefs. An unexamined society may be worth living in; but the constraints it imposes are hardly worthy of those who proclaim that they are free men in a free society. And the protection of "sacred institutions and beliefs" too often becomes a flimsy self-serving mask for the protection of existing structures of power and prerogative.

At this point the fundamental opposition between the two positions breaks down. The Madisonian and the Rousseauian may arrive at a limited agreement. The latter claims that coalition politics without participatory democracy tends to be irresponsible, manipulative, and class dominated. The former claims that participatory democracy without coalition politics tends to be provincial, factional, and lacking in necessary political and material props—i.e., stability, welfare, and a framework of protected rights. They are both right. In the final analysis, the two institutional processes are essential to one another because in important respects, they complement and reinforce one another. This is so even though in other respects there is, and always must be, unresolved tension between them.

The general case for participatory institutions is strengthened by relating the point about the mutual interdependence of the two processes to an old liberal perplexity. Just what attitude ought a liberal democrat to take toward underdeveloped societies that do not permit full freedom of political opposition?

In a previous section I observed that liberal theorists have generally acknowledged that there exist cultural and industrial prerequisites for a formal democracy of countervailing power. But liberal theories of democracy have rarely proposed definite criteria on the basis of which one could assess the extent to which democratization of these societies had been achieved, nor liberal guidelines for determining how to rub out deficiencies that impede progress toward political democracy. By and large, liberals have tended to echo the conventional response—that education, industrialization, rule of law, and a few, precariously established, formal freedoms are sufficient evidence of adequate democratization of the society.

These tests tend to be strengthened or relaxed depending on whether

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one is militantly anti-Communist or militantly pro-revolutionary. The anti-Communist liberal will apply the democracy test more stringently to "pro-Communist" or revolutionary societies, less stringently to anti-Communist societies. Many radicals, on the other hand, tend to suppose that for societies in the throes of revolutionary ferment industrialization alone will do. Industrialization cannot, after all, take place in a velvet box any more than violent revolution itself. So bloody suppression, not only of organized political opposition, but of speech, press, and other "bourgeois" rights are not always rejected as completely as they should be. For example, I have never been able to understand why someone cannot both view Castroism as progressive in certain industrial and social respects, and as tyrannical and reactionary to the extent that the Castro regime has dismantled the traditional structures of rule of law—especially as the despised legal institutions seemed to have functioned well enough to have enabled Castro himself to escape imprisonment during his earliest period of rebelliousness.

The point is that the conventional criteria are not very satisfactory because they do not enable us to make fine enough discriminations. By the conventional tests alone Russia, for example, would have to be said to be moving more rapidly towards democracy than Pakistan or Egypt. Perhaps this is so; but there is another property of the last two systems that Russia lacks.

Both Pakistan and Egypt have tried to incorporate an element of participatory democracy into their respective social systems. Pakistan has done so roughly on the model of India's experiments in village democracy; Egypt, more or less, on the model of Yugoslavia's experiments with workers' councils. If what I have argued is sound, the development of these growing points for democracy outside the conventional framework of more or less autocratic power should both augur well for the future of political democracy in these countries and, incidentally, yield an important new criterion in terms of which to assess underdeveloped nations that are not democracies in the sense of permitting organized political opposition at all levels of power. Many countries seem, in fact, to be adopting such experiments in one form or another.

Indeed, just to pursue this line of thinking to its domestic conclusion, perhaps what is good for India and Pakistan, Egypt and Yugoslavia is good for Mississippi, Alabama, and even, pardon the unrealistic thought, for New York City.

The Madisonian may not yet be able to shake the conviction that there is something deeply unrealistic about a democracy of participation. There seems to be some overriding obstacle to this form of democracy,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

something rooted deeply in the very nature of man and of his institutions--an iron law of organization that decrees that any social *movement* will either be transformed into *organization,* or wither and die. And, as Michels and the other elite theorists argued, there seems further to be an iron law of oligarchy that decrees that, in any organization, pure democracy will inevitably be supplanted by oligarchy. Indeed, some sociologists believe the institutional and psychological forces that make for personal irresponsibility to be so powerful, that they have come to regard widespread apathy as a definite virtue of any social system.

The problems raised by these heroic criticisms will not here be discussed in the sociological and psychological detail required. But, in line with the earlier criticism of the politics of pseudo-realism, this much must be said: After all the marvelously recondite arguments have been adduced by the new pessimists of the social sciences, one may still suspect that their ideological convictions control their "scientific" judgments. The possibilities in political things are not as narrow as one's interests, fecklessness, and moral preconceptions may make one believe.

Moreover, if for any reason a person does come to believe that it is impossible to achieve even a partial democracy of participation, then that belief will diminish the likelihood that participatory institutions will in fact take root and grow. The Madisonian makes his wish father to his belief; and his beliefs partly create the sociological facts he conveniently predicts when he applies his "Iron Laws."

But the Rousseauian has an even more crushing response. There is really no need to speculate about these matters. For while skeptics speculate, the possibility of a democracy of participation is being proved by those who believe it to be possible and are acting on that belief. In the urban ghettoes of Chicago, Cleveland, and Newark, in the rural ghettoes of Alabama and Mississippi, young men and women with a vision are helping to forge new institutions undeterred by the theoretical cautions of their realistic elders. Moreover, the very pressure of need has generated "disorderly" surrogates for socially accepted forms of participation. Sit-ins, lie-ins, teach-ins, protests, civil disobedience, cooperatives, tent cities, Freedom parties, petitions, legal action, poor peoples' corporations, mass rallies, wildcat strikes, and other social inventions are expressions of the need to participate more directly in the making of policies that vitally affect one's life. Nor has this proliferation of institutional devices for satisfying a felt need been fruitless. For the rhetoric of left-wing radicalism is being gradually reabsorbed into the rhetoric of American liberalism. Thus, with all its defects, the Poverty Program will have one achievement of historic significance to its credit. By ad-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ministrative rule it requires that the poor, whom its programs are meant to benefit, shall have representation on the boards and committees that are authorized to administer those programs. Already liberals are beginning to think of other ways to apply this principle to the administration of public funds.

No doubt, this rule is honored in the breach. But the important thing is that for the first time in America's modern industrial era the right of participation in a form other than an occasional vote has become part of the rhetoric of public policy, and initiates a new dialectic of disorder. Jeffersonian rhetoric may once again be heard in the conventional agencies of the land. Stodgy officials of planned parenthood associations, private welfare agencies, of legal aid societies, community action committees, educational associations, and of many other groups, private and public, have long and zealously guarded their prerogative to do good for others without being bothered by those lucky recipients of their largesse. Increasingly these officials are forced to respond in some way to the insistent pressure of those who insist on implementation of the policy decreeing participation by the poor. Debate and discussion, conflict and cooperation generate a new unfulfilled aspiration to participate—one that will not be satisfied by an occasional vote for members of a poverty program committee.

And in our colleges and universities, students no longer ask for the right to share in the vital decisions that shape their educational experience—they *demand* it. College administrations are beginning to respond to this demand. At Berkeley and at the University of Michigan steps have been taken. At Tuskegee Institute, Booker T. Washington groans. The only brake on a more accelerated pace of change is that of the students' own fears and insecurities—in large part the product of the pseudo-realism with which their minds and spirits have been contaminated. But there is every prospect that at least the radicals among this generation of students will not be bought off. If they are, it will be primarily because the self-indulgence of their politics brings with it despair and capitulation to the forms of democratically irresponsible power they rightly loathe.

The foregoing analysis points directly to a new politics of radical pressure that synthesizes in mutually reinforcing ways welfare politics, coalition politics, and participatory democracy—a politics of radical pressure which operates on the principle that when one of these three vital constituents of a total liberal strategy is formally absent or defective, everything, short of rebellion, required to provide informal substi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tutes for them ought to be done—but done *effectively*. Gunnar Myrdal has argued that the creation of participatory institutions lies beyond the welfare state. He is wrong in supposing that the task of reconstructing social and political institutions should wait until the basic tasks of welfare politics have been completed, though he is right in thinking that the life of autonomous mind and spirit requires relief from the insistent pressures of abject biological and economic need. But morally and politically, the development of a more deliberative process of coalition politics, the growth of participatory institutions, and the completion of the welfare state are concomitant enterprises—none more important from a theoretical point of view than any of the others, all three absolutely indispensable conditions of a good American society. (In concrete situations it is, of course, necessary to assign value-priorities. I have no illusion that acceptance of what has just been argued will result in invariable harmony when such assignments are made. My aim has been, rather, to counteract the tendency to focus so exclusively on one value that others are neglected.)

I say "a *new* politics of radical pressure." But this is misleading. What is really required is recognition of the processes that have proliferated and developed since Rosa Parks decided to keep her bus seat. This is the larger social meaning of the Negro revolution. What is also required is a more deliberate effort to use those processes more effectively in pursuit of radical aims. Sit-ins, Freedom parties, teach-ins, and the like are surrogates for participation in the processes by which public policies are formed and from which those involved in these activities are normally excluded. (Often even from the *pro forma* exercise of the franchise, though this is admittedly in the process of rapid change.) My quarrel is certainly not with the existence or further exploitation of these social inventions. My quarrel is only with the supposition that they can be used effectively in any and all situations of legitimate social discontent. My quarrel is basically with pseudo-realists who eschew such tactics, and only secondarily with those who employ them self-indulgently. Whether tactics outside the frame of more conventional political processes should be adopted is not something that can be decided in general —on the basis of an incantation of ritualistic formulas like, "Protest, not establishment politics," or "Protest, not debate."

The strategic concept I am proposing is that of using any device, short of open rebellion or revolution, to bring pressure to bear in support of liberal aims. But in any given situation the specific choice of tactics should be decided on the basis of that which effectively, and over time, tends to enable realization of the many values that a liberal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seeks to foster. There is, from this point of view, simply no general case to be made for adherence to one preferred tactic or another. For there is no substitute for coldly reflective calculation based on knowledge of the concrete situation and comprehensive grasp of the entire range of liberal values we should seek to move toward.*

It is of central importance that every program advanced by radical liberals be so conceived that as many liberal values as possible are promoted; and, where they already exist, protected. Thus, for example, in advocating an extension of the War on Poverty, the liberal should demand not only that more of the poor be brought under the program, nor only that the poor be permitted representatives on local committees that administer the funds, but that the Poverty Program be used as an instrument for destroying those more conventional welfare programs that practice paternalism and breed servility; and that, wherever possible, it encourages a fuller participation by those the program is designed to benefit—not only in the administration of funds, but in the organization of the poor, in the development of leadership skills, and through giving top priority to experimental programs designed to foster fuller and freer community action.

Let us call the idea that has emerged from the preceding argument "the principle of the promotion of multiple liberal values." Given this principle, it becomes impossible to run, seriatim, through the list of evils requiring social remedy described in an earlier section. Instead, the programs designed to remedy *any* should, within the limits of possibility, be designed to remedy all.

VI. American Liberalism and Foreign Policy

Viewed from this perspective, what shape might liberal programs take? This is not the place to apply the moral and strategic principles proposed in the foregoing to all of America's social problems. But I cannot conclude without applying those principles to problems that today generate more confusion and division within liberalism's ranks than have any others in the past two decades—the problems of foreign policy.

Liberals are divided about U.S. Vietnam policy for a number of reasons. They disagree about the policies that best serve America's vital interests. They are at odds about the morality of our intervention. They

*Even given these ideal conditions there is a residual source of conflict that should not be overlooked. Two persons who have the same values may yet disagree about their relative importance.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

disagree about the nature and threat of Communism and on the efficacy of military intervention as an instrument of American policy.

These differences are not new. They were more modestly expressed during earlier crises—the Korean War, the intervention in Lebanon, the Bay of Pigs adventure, and even the Cuban missile crisis. In the cases of Lebanon and the Bay of Pigs, the issue was whether we had any business at all being there. In the cases of Korea and the missile crisis, liberal disagreement centered on the extent and nature of our intervention.

Though disagreement on what best serves America's national interests appears to be straightforwardly factual, it is certain that judgments made on the basis of the inadequate evidence available to both supporters and critics of Administration policy are deeply affected by "internal prejudices." And moral beliefs are among the most powerful of the "prejudices" that shape such judgments. For example, it is clear that in matters affecting our relations with other nations the bugle call of old-fashioned patriotism is heard much more insistently by Vice President Humphrey than by Senator Fulbright. In domestic policy, Humphrey is no doubt a better liberal than Fulbright. But when confronted by the conflicting claims of a narrow patriotism and liberal morality, Humphrey, more consistently than Fulbright, has tended to dismiss the latter in favor of the former. This conflict between patriotism and morality poses the deepest and most perplexing problems for liberals trying to make judgments about foreign policy.

Most liberals have escaped the full force of the dilemma by being unduly optimistic about the inherent harmony between patriotic and liberal aims. In quiet moments they may question whether America's vital interests are invariably fused with the defense of freedom and democracy around the globe; but in the hurly-burly of public debate, they have not, until recently, found it difficult to convince themselves that America's authentic voice is the voice of Right. Their optimism has been reinforced by the development of nuclear military potential. For the existence of these terrible weapons makes it relatively easy to identify national interest with the peace of the world, and then to suppose that the deployment of national military power is required to preserve that peace. To suppose otherwise encourages appeasement on the model of Munich, and thereby increases the probability of nuclear showdown. Or so the familiar rationale goes.

The self-deception is aided by another factor. Because nations live in a "state of nature," the tendency to dismiss morality as irrelevant to policy seems to be strongest in the case of foreign policy. "We must not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

suppose," the amoralist assures us, "that in the absence of supra-national law the claims of individual morality have application." Those who fear collectivism should be made to recognize that the real danger lies in this sort of collectivist abandonment of the strictures of individual morality. In no other area of public life can one have less confidence that professed moral commitments will be honored. Those schooled in the traditions of American Puritanism abandon their morality with remarkable ease when they turn their attention to foreign policy. Of course, they suffer the pangs of conscience for their sins. But the psychic pain is a small price to pay for the opportunity to prove to the powerful, that good guys can be tough guys. Besides, remorse proves a most excellent expiation—a way of readying the spirit for the next sin.

Patriotic passions play a more influential role in foreign than domestic policy because national security seems more obviously involved. President Kennedy used to claim, "Domestic policy can only defeat us; foreign policy can kill us." This is true only for the short run. But with so much thought to be at stake it is not hard to understand why the relevance of more general moral concerns seems small.

The mischief encouraged by the view Kennedy held is then compounded by withholding or distorting information vital to rational assessment of foreign policy. The excuse invariably given is that the truth would jeopardize national security. Of course, more often than not, the truth would also embarrass officials.

There is another group of liberals who are very ready to admit that patriotism may conflict with morality—and absolutely repudiate the former. They fancy that in so doing they are being good citizens and striking a blow against chauvinism. But the matter is not so simple. As a liberal, one may reject the claims of patriotism. As an American, he should not; nor, usually, can he. For as Americans we all have special obligations that we owe to other members of the national community. Only a person who *authentically* repudiates the system, and all the benefits it affords, can legitimately claim exemption from these special obligations. Socrates may have exaggerated these obligations when he sipped the hemlock; but he had a point.

The situation is similar to that faced by one who is both a liberal and a parent. As a liberal he is concerned equally about the welfare of every child. But as a parent, he both will and should consider the welfare of his own child in a special way. It is human and it is right to do so. Forced to choose between alternatives that might really harm his child and might really violate his political convictions, the parent has a definite obligation to give special, though not necessarily overriding,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

weight to his child's interests. Similarly, as a member of a national community—even one that falls far short of meeting the criteria of John Dewey's Great Community—if an individual more or less "consents" to the existing structure of social institutions, if he accepts its benefits, then he ought to acknowledge that he has some special obligations. (It must be dim acknowledgment of this point that partly accounts for the fact that many adopt the rhetoric, but not the reality, of revolutionary repudiation of American institutions.)

The visceral patriotism that is inculcated from birth is likely to find expression in any event. Too often it is expressed in an inverted form—through acts of dramatic protest that are more of a cry for a beloved country than an outcry against a hated system. It is simply better and more effective to avoid self-delusion, and to come to terms with one's own loyalties. That way one is not so tempted to deal with the hard and complex options of the moral life thoughtlessly—to exaggerate a nation's virtues, or its vices.

Yet reason also requires that the liberal should try to articulate the principles that ought to guide his judgment and action when forced to choose between his liberal commitments and his nation's narrower interests. Simple fomulas are not available, but some things can be said.

First, the concern must be for *national* interests—interests that affect every American roughly equally. Too often the expressed concern for our "vital national interests" is nothing but a disguised effort to preserve or enhance one's power and privileges. Liberals should relentlessly expose those who invest the national interest with their own vested interests. Whether or not there is a single power elite, there are surely powerful elites that seek to make of American foreign policy an instrument of corporate aggrandizement. For example, there is little doubt that this country's unwillingness to do more than it does to bring down the viciously racist South African regime is in some part due to the fact that American investors are making profits at the rate of 25 percent per year on their original investments in that brutal land.

Secondly, we should frankly recognize that there may be times when interests are vital without being national; or, worse, times when the nation has embarked on a fateful course without adequate justification. Under these conditions why should we expect or demand that every one share equally in the sacrifices entailed? Let those who participate most in the potential benefits of the enterprise pay the heaviest price. Or let those who favor the enterprise strongly make the necessary sacrifices. At the very least, let us allocate this sacrifice randomly. It is a vicious patriotism that compels those who participate least in American freedom

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and affluence to share equally in its defense. It is more vicious when the sacrifice imposed is great—perhaps one's very life. It is yet more vicious when the sacrifice of those who benefit least is greater by far than that imposed on those who benefit most. To permit these things to happen is to make a mockery of the voluntarism that is supposed to be the operative principle of our free society.

The point does have practical application. A selective service system that penalizes the poor, the Negro, and the undereducated for the sin of being born without equal opportunity is a moral outrage. For another example, every time a planned expansion of desirable welfare programs is postponed in order to pay for military adventure, the rights of those in need are violated. (It is time that our liberal leaders acknowledge that failure to expand freedoms through acts of omission is no less a form of tyranny than elimination of freedoms that already exist. Rights can be denied as well as destroyed.)

Third, to the extent that the interests involved are national in the relevant sense, there should be a rough correlation between the importance of these interests and the human cost protecting them requires. It is principally this point that accounts for liberal dissent and division about Vietnam. What the American government has authorized for the sake of dubious interests and commitments is felt by many to be barbaric. Among these people are many who will even concede that American interests are indeed jeopardized. But they maintain that these interests are at best marginal—not remotely important enough to justify the heinousness of our means. The napalming and saturation bombing, the well-documented brain-washing and torture in which we have participated, the reckless misuse of our young combatants to prop a military regime that clearly lacks the support even of the part of the population within the regions still securely held—what is all of this but the moral counterpart of what Stalin and his cohorts did in Russia for the sake of industrial growth? The Stalinist nature of our means cannot begin to be justified by the marginal national interests allegedly being protected by a military policy that is not restrained enough.

Those of us who view matters in this way are simply less inclined than liberals like Vice-President Humphrey to permit patriotism to override morality in the making of foreign policy.

We believe that liberal Administrations have too often tended to purchase immunity from the charge of being radical or socialistic in domestic policy by being especially tough and "amoral" in foreign policy. We know that many who are capable of thinking with fine-grained discrimination about our domestic problems often think in crudely stereo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

typic terms about the nature, interests, and moral claims of people in other lands. Liberals are not the worst offenders—but they are far from being immune to this disease of the moral imagination. There is nothing unusual nor particularly blameworthy about the tendency. With the best will in the world, liberal policy normally requires a subtlety of empirical discrimination that it is virtually impossible to achieve. For such distinctions must normally be drawn against a background of inadequate information and the cultural insensitivity that is bound to affect one born and bred in a very different culture. Americans who go abroad quickly recognize these defects in others. Why should they find it so difficult to understand that the very same cultural insularity is even more likely to characterize Americans themselves? For American culture has had to be even more constraining than most, if only because it has had to shape national character out of incredibly heterogeneous human beings. Ugly Americans are not just a national calamity, they are a human inevitability. "You Americans don't understand. You are making beggars of our children, prostitutes of our women, and Communists of our men!"—this was the rebuke hurled at a young American soldier by a South Vietnamese teacher when the soldier threw candy on the ground before a swarm of pleading children. The young American was only trying to be friendly.

The general thrust of the foregoing analysis is that, though American liberals cannot be expected to subordinate national interests to the claims of morality on every occasion, they must make sure that these claims are not casually overridden on *any* occasion. The point, though abstract and difficult to apply concretely, is absolutely central. The main function of liberalism, in the conduct of foreign policy is steadily and intelligently to maintain the relevance of liberal morality; to insure that neither ends nor means are fastened on the nation without relentless scrutiny from liberalism's moral point of view; to affirm that, in the balancing of narrower against wider interests, the latter are normally preeminent. I have tried to indicate how this perspective might be applied to the present Vietnam policy. Taken seriously, these abstract considerations would, for some, mean the difference between support and opposition to U.S. policy—a significant difference.

There are those who regard any stress on the morality of foreign policy as defective—mere "moralism." Now it is true that great evil has often resulted from appeal to moral principles in the making of American foreign policy. This is so in part because problems of morality often have a surface simplicity that belies the underlying complexity of the factual and moral considerations involved. Thus many refuse the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

same sustained effort of intelligence in moral matters that they urge as a matter of course in areas of their technical competence. There are many brilliant technicians in our scientific culture who take a holiday from reason when they address themselves to moral problems—especially whenever questions of priority involving essentially vague concepts such as "national interest," "justice," "welfare," and "human rights" are at issue. But if, in making morality relevant to foreign policy, one tends to be less rigorously empirical, or to use pious moral rhetoric vacuously, or to think in terms of moral absolutes when the available alternatives are different shades of gray, or arrogantly to suppose that the specific institutions of one's native land provide the best models for every other society, or to suppose that there are no historical prerequisites for progressive change, the fault lies not in the effort to make morality relevant but in the thoughtlessness with which the effort is made. The remedy lies not in abandoning morality, but in embracing rationality. The mark of a truly advanced society is not only or mainly its superior technology, but also the quality of thought and morals that shape decisions of how to deploy the power its technology makes available.

Those in charge of the conduct of American foreign policy are often moralistic. They are too often implacably self-righteous, devoid of compassion. Their self-righteousness and lack of compassion have an epistemological consequence.

For to view the ferment in the underdeveloped nations of the world from the lofty height of a judging deity, effectively screens out the agony that is the daily lot of millions of individual human beings. It incapacitates a person for the task of understanding revolutionary ferment. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., analyzing Dean Rusk's participation in the Kennedy Administration, commented:

> At times one wondered whether the harshness of life—the seething planet of revolutionary violence, ferocity and hate, shadowed by nuclear holocaust—ever penetrated the screen of clichés, ever shook that imperturbable blandness.*

But Schlesinger errs in supposing that the moral insensitivity of men like Rusk is a personal fault; an accident of temperament. Rather the trait is a chronic disorder resulting from a social milieu that encourages us to view human beings as mere things, instruments of policy in the gigantic clash betwen the forces of light and the forces of darkness. Beneath the "imperturbable blandness" of men like Rusk is a controlling passion for abstract freedom and abstract democracy as ferocious in its

*Op Cit., p. 434.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

consequences as the inquisitorial commitment to the Christian brotherhood of man and sovereignty of the one true God.

It is at this point that theorists who view the application of moral principles to the making of foreign policy come back with what they regard as a clinching argument. "Whenever power is used," they say, "certain men use other men as means. This is inherent in the very exercise of power. In the conduct of foreign policy, power must be used; sin cannot, therefore, be avoided." The argument is simpleminded. The authority to whom appeal is usually made by such "realists" is Kant. But Kant claimed something different. He wrote: "Treat every rational being, including yourself, always as an end and never as a *mere* means." (My italics.) It is simply a *non sequitur* to claim that this dictum implies that men are never to be treated as means to some end. All it proscribes is that this never be the whole of the treatment they are accorded. What Kant's authority suggests, the common sense of morality confirms. Those who exercise power do not inevitably sin. Whether the use of a person as a means is or is not immoral depends on two factors: Are his claims as a human being as fully respected as they should? Are the ends pursued morally worthy? No doubt, it is not easy to decide in particular situations. But if rape is likely, try to avoid it instead of moaning about man's depravity.

It is precisely because American statesmen like Rusk lack compassion that they so often make *mere* means of individuals our foreign policies affect. A liberal foreign policy would aim at a world in which each person possesses the resources of materials, mind and spirit, as well as the opportunities, to carve out a career in conformity to that person's own nature and reasoned choice. At the same time, the policies directed to this end would not treat as *mere* means those who are meant to be the beneficiaries of our benevolence. Unfortunately, that is precisely how countless millions throughout the world are today regarded and dealt with by our policy-makers. Vietnam provides only the most depressing example.

Up to this point, I have dwelled on the relevance of liberal morality to foreign policy. But beyond morality lies a body of doctrines that are peculiarly relevant to this world of revolutionary tumult. For since liberals began to doubt that a free market economy was the answer to all liberal dreams, there has emerged a loose set of principles that help them to understand patterns of dynamic change; a sort of *liberal dialectic.*

It starts with the assumption that revolutions will be made by people who have come to believe that the abysmal poverty and arbitrary

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

control of their lives are unnecessary. Once the feudal conviction that life must move in predestined grooves is shattered, revolution becomes inevitable unless those who rule buy off discontent with genuine social reform. Those who, in their misery, are busy making a revolution will have little time or inclination to worry as much as they perhaps should about the principles and values rightly cherished by relatively affluent liberals in relatively sophisticated societies. They want bread and relief from personal insecurity—in that order. There will be time enough, or so they think, to worry about freedom and democracy, in their more developed aspects, after the revolution. One does not have to approve of, or to refrain from criticizing, the fact that revolutions are not humane. One simply recognizes that that is the way things are likely to happen; and that criticism without self-righteous blame is possible and desirable.

New forms of tyranny do inevitably result during the post-revolutionary period; but with a difference, if the tyranny is reimposed along with bread and the growth of modern industry. It is not necessary to be a Maoist to recognize that freedom and democracy will mean little to a populace that remembers too well the misery of life that has gone before. Nor is it necessary to suppose that the nature or extent of the tyranny that results is the same in different circumstances. India is far from being a liberal democracy; but the forms of oppression that exist there are far preferable to those that exist in China.

In any event, memories die, and tyranny produces new discontents, new forms of personal insecurity. Thus there is a reemergence of the demand for institutions that foster relief from oppression and, eventually, the conditions of self-respect and the fuller development of human powers. The prerequisites and consequences of a growing industrial order —education and economic sufficiency—will insure that. Economic adequacy will provide the material base; education, the skills of mind and the qualities of spirit that encourage growth of the desire to achieve a progressively fuller control over one's own destiny. This will happen first in professional groups that the very imperatives of industrial growth absolutely require. The scientific and technological communities will hold an oppressive regime to ransom—and the ransom they will demand will be not only money, but relief from arbitrary exercise of power. That is, rule of law and personal autonomy will be established; at first in limited spheres and only precariously. But over time there will be an escalating demand for freedom, and the seeds of discontent will be sown in the society generally. For the exercise of freedom breeds new demands

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for freedom. Only ruthless oppression can block these developments; and such ruthlessness would prove industrially self-defeating.

Liberal progress may, therefore, receive many setbacks. But the human pressures generated will be relentless over time. The precipitating mechanism at every point will be what I earlier called the dialectic of disorder. For at each stage the rhetoric of change will outpace the change that is actually permitted. Those who are responsible for perpetrating the rhetorical fraud will find that they have truly sown the seeds, if not of their own violent destruction, at least of their peaceful demise.

History is on the side of liberalism—always supposing that history is not abruptly terminated by nuclear holocaust. This is so precisely because it is men who make history—men with their capacity for deceit, cupidity, irrationality, aggressiveness, bigotry; but also with their unquenchable desire for dignity and the fullest development of their human powers. If the dialectic gives liberals no advantage over Marxists in their ability to forecast the onset and course of revolutionary action, it does enable liberals more accurately to forecast the aftermath of revolutionary disorder.

After the Second World War, many liberals were fixated on the awesome tyranny of Stalin's regime. The "savage anti-Semitism, the turning over to the Gestapo of anti-Nazi refugees, the butchery of entire populations, the starvation of the peasantry and exploitation of the proletariat, the terrorizing of the intelligentsia and the exile to slave camps of uncounted millions,"* are enough to explain the fixation. Still, it remains a tragedy that, during the postwar period, many American liberals were so thrown into panic by Stalinist excesses that they failed to invoke the very principles of change that would have promoted a more flexible and, from the liberal point of view, more effective reaction to Stalinist tryranny. A liberal as sensitive as George F. Kennan declared just before Stalin's death that the monolithic character of Stalinist Russia was not likely to be altered by peaceful, internal change. It can be truly claimed that most liberals had simply lost not only their head but touch with the insights of their own tradition. For Stalin's ruthless suppression of freedom was bound to produce precisely those forms of arbitrary government and, consequently, insecurity, indignity, and also the erosion of the self-respect that generates not only the demand for rule of law and constitutional order, but the yearning for freedom—not just on the lowest rungs of the social system, but on the highest as well. For no man rests easy when he might hear the midnight knock at his door. Thus, as the generations die who made the revolution and re-

*H. Swados, "What's Left of the Left," *The Nation,* 100th Anniversary Issue, p. 113.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

member hunger too well, the spring of liberal aspiration—the desire freely to create one's own destiny—reasserts itself. It is happening in Russia; and it will happen in China.

Many will undoubtedly regard the foregoing as wildly optimistic. The deep cultural differences that so divide the peoples of the world—the rise of Nazism in one of the world's most industrialized and cultivated nations, and the magnitude of the problems of population and economic disparities—will seem antithetical to the proposition that history belongs to liberalism.

The weight of historical evidence and the results of more systematic social inquiry does, however, seem to confirm the claim that human beings are not so very different; that the shaping influence of different cultures is undermined by the common institutions of industrial society. In every more advanced nation, cultural sophisticates fear the encroaching pressure of the "American way of life"—that is, of industrial civilization in its brassiest, most wasteful forms—more than any other social development. Nazi Germany was a political order destined either to conquer or to be destroyed. It was destroyed. Had it conquered, I believe the processes of the liberal dialectic would have occurred over a long stretch of time. Finally, the immense economic and population problems that exist are cause for alarm, but not for despair. For they can be dealt with, if only men have the will; we do not lack the necessary knowledge or the resources.

If only men have the will—that is crucial. The evidence for these optimistic assumptions is admittedly indeterminate. Yet, to repeat a point central to what has gone before, if the dialectic is a good conjecture, and if it is a possible outcome, then why should we not accept it as a basis for policy in order better to increase the probability of achieving a liberal society. Under conditions of indeterminacy, the pessimistic hypothesis is not less an ideological response, nor more empirical, than the optimistic hypothesis.

Moreover, the imperatives of social change in industrial society that have been articulated are premised on a judiciously optimistic conception of human nature. I am not denying man's flaws; only affirming that despite everything, there is also in him an unquenchable desire to carve out a career that is in conformity to his own nature and reasoned choice —in brief, to live the kind of life the liberal prescribes. Orwell's 1984 nightmare is an instructive projection of tendencies present in any society; but no more than that. For no society has moved very far down the road Orwell envisioned, without encountering barriers, and sometimes disaster. The desire for dignity rooted in self-esteem and the full

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

development of one's own powers seems in time to be renewed, no matter how individuals are oppressed.

What emerges from these arguments are two points of transcendent importance for present American foreign policy.

First, Communist societies are not more heinous nor resistant to pressures making for progressive internal change than many other tyrannies that have plagued men in history. Indeed, in some ways they are more susceptible to such change—because the scientific, technological, and educational growth they inevitably foster do create those seeds of discontent that set the liberal dialectic into motion. Yugoslavia provides the best support for this optimistic assessment. Today, only two decades after the Yugoslav Communist party assumed power, it is in the process of abdicating from exclusive executive power and is instead adopting the role of guide and stimulus to the nation.* Whether this change is more formal than real remains to be seen. But few objective observers of what has been happening in Yugoslavia would deny that, though organized opposition to the Communist party has not to this point in time been permitted, the participatory institutions that exist in industry and increasingly in politics have acquired considerably more than merely formal authority. If the account of the nature and threat of Communism here proposed were to gain general acceptance in the United States, the still far too rigid lines of American cold-war policy would be profoundly modified.

Second, America's almost invariable response to revolutionary disorder—the rhetoric of the carrot, the substance of the stick—has proved a failure. At the present time military power is viewed as the main instrument of American policy, economic, political, cultural, and educational assistance as ancillary. Unless this order of priorities is reversed, there can be no escape from a pattern that has led to a mounting succession of disasters in foreign policy.

To adopt this perspective is not to contend that we should dismantle our military shield: only that it be used to further, not, as presently tends to be the case, to defeat liberal aims around the globe. As Walter Lippmann tentatively put it:

---

*In a comment on these developments, in *The Observer,* (London) June 19, 1966, Edward Crankshaw writes: "The proposed dismantling of the Yugoslav Communist party apparatus, the surrender of the levers of power by an entrenched ruling class of privileged functionaries, is an undertaking of positively stunning sweep and boldness. Its implications for the Communist world in general are quite beyond the imagination at this stage, but are obviously complex and exciting to a degree. Marshall Tito for the second time in his career (the first was the defiance of Stalin in 1948) has started off a great process which will change the mood of history."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> . . . in the backward and undeveloped regions of the globe, military power and political influence are antithetical. In order to exercise influence, political, economic, cultural, technical, it is necessary to limit military intervention to those rare instances where there is a clear and present danger to an indubitable vital interest. (*Newsweek,* June 20, 1966).

At the moment, many liberals who in principle favor the proposed reversal of priorities are fearful of implementing the required programs of assistance because of the way they have been used to provide a rationale for American military adventure in Vietnam and elsewhere. But the solution to this problem is not to abandon such programs, but to administer them differently. Increasingly, our assistance should be put at the disposal of international agencies in whose independence both we and the recipient nations can have confidence. In this way the use of such aid as a pretext for military intervention can be prevented. In this way also the institutions of international order can be strengthened; the cause of world peace more effectively served.

There is a sophisticated response to these arguments—one that I am convinced lies at the heart of present American foreign policy. It is the claim that, though the optimistic assumptions implicit in the dialectical view may prove correct, there is also the possibility of ruin if we discount the bellicose rhetoric of our adversaries. Responsible officials may hope for the best, but it is their duty to plan for the worst. For example, though China may be adolescent in her present expression of fear of our aggressive intent, she happens also to be in a position to jeopardize vital American interests before she grows up. Though she may not yet have matched her deeds to increasingly abrasive words, she may yet do so. Any American government that did not maintain sufficient military power, strategically deployed and, where necessary, actively engaged to forestall that contingency, would be irresponsible.

In the last analysis, this is the reason for our intervention in Vietnam; this is why we have ringed China with the most awesome military potential ever possessed by a nation; this is why we have so emphasized military might at the expense of economic effort throughout Asia. The public rationale that emphasizes our commitments and our benevolence is of negligible importance by comparison with this allegedly prudent desire to cope with genuine dangers to our vital national interests.

To accept the foregoing argument amounts to abandonment of the demand that liberal morality be made relevant to foreign policy. For it rests on the assumption that any means which effectively counter the *possible*—not *probable*—threat to vital national interests is permissible.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And so, if statesmen are convinced that despicable means are effective, despicable means will be used. Human beings will be squandered in order to forestall possible outcomes. The remoteness and the massiveness of the evil makes it banal, therefore tolerable.

I do not deny that great evils may be required to forestall even greater ones. But is it too much to ask that the adoption of inhuman means be a response, not to the mere possibility, but to the *probability* of national disaster?

And, in any event, the contingency argument cuts both ways. For it is also *possible* that our policies in Southeast Asia will precipitate nuclear war. Which contingency are we to plan for: the possibility of nuclear war precipitated by de-escalation or the possibility of nuclear war precipitated by escalation? Assuming good will, both aim at preserving the peace. The reasonable alternative cannot be decided without careful appeal to evidence. But, the Administration's record of erroneous prediction in Southeast Asia provides little basis for confidence in its assumptions or its ability to assess evidence objectively.

Consider the following record. On February 25, 1963, Senator Mansfield, after a fact-finding trip to Vietnam reported to President Kennedy that,

> Those who bear responsibility for directing operations under the new strategy are optimistic over prospects for success. Indeed, success was predicted to the group (of senators) almost without exception, by responsible Americans and Vietnamese, in terms of a year or two hence.

In a footnote, Senator Mansfield added that Admiral Harry Felt more cautiously predicted that it might take three years. Three years later, almost to the day, President Johnson ordered the bombing of North Vietnam. Four years later, there are over 280,000 men in South Vietnam, and at least 400,000 will be there by the end of this year. In May, 1963, Secretary of Defense McNamara announced that we had turned the corner in Vietnam. On October 2, 1963, he and General Taylor reported to President Kennedy that in "their judgment the major part of the U.S. military task can be completed by the end of 1965." On February 18, 1964, Secretary McNamara predicted, in testimony before the Congress, that the "bulk" of U.S. forces could be expected to leave by 1965.

After the war's escalation in February, 1965, the Administration justified its course in terms of the following considerations:

i. Air strikes would stem the flow of men and materials from North Vietnam into the South.

ii. The show of force would weaken our adversaries' will to fight.

iii. Air strikes would hearten our allies and dismay Peking.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

iv. The air strikes would diminish the need to send large numbers of conventional forces.

v. Escalation would stabilize the political situation in the South.

A year later, not one of these predictions has been proved accurate. In fact, on January 20, 1966, in his most recent report, this time to President Johnson, Senator Mansfield said:

> . . . the fact is that [the present South Vietnamese government is], as other Vietnamese governments have been over the past decade, at the beginning of a beginning in dealing with the problems of popular mobilization in support of the government.

To the dismal record of wrong prediction must be added all the reasons for distrusting the judgments of public officials described in the section that dealt with the politics of pseudo-realism.

The Administration's fears of the Chinese threat to our national security and its assumptions about how best to cope with that threat have the semblance of reason. But when put to the test of available evidence, they are exposed for what they are—the approximate counterpart of the less reasonably expressed fears of the Communist Chinese about America's aggressive intent.

What ought critics do? Many believe that nothing can be done until the structure of American society is transformed. They argue that reason and conventional political pressure cannot drive a wedge between those corporate groups that determine the shape of present politicies and those directly responsible for making those policies. They accept C. Wright Mills's thesis that, "In so far as national events are decided, the power elite are those who decide them."* And, like Mills, they regard decisions having to do with issues of war and peace as "national events."

At the same time, they tend to ignore other claims Mills made—albeit, incoherently. "Any contemporary re-statement of liberal and socialist goals," he wrote, "must include as central the idea of a society in which all men would become men of substantive reason, whose independent reasoning would have structural consequences for their society, its history, and thus for their own life fates."** And, developing the strategic implications of this view, he also claimed that though we live in a society that is democratic mainly in its legal forms and its formal expectations, "we ought not to minimize the enormous value and the considerable opportunity these circumstances make available.† That is,

*_The Power Elite_, New York, Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 18.
**_The Sociological Imagination_, New York, Oxford University Press, 1959, pp. 173-4.
†_Ibid._ p. 191.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one tendency of Mills's thought leads straight to what I have called the politics of radical pressure. And such tactics *cannot effectively influence foreign policy,* if there exists a power elite that is monolithic and impervious to the constraints of reason and peripheral pressure. In their frustration, those who believe that such an elite does exist tend to practice the politics of self-indulgence. But the consequences of this posture for the making of foreign policy are at best unhelpful, at worst a tactical boon to those who defend Administration policies.

Even if structural change is required to alter the central tendencies of American foreign policy in desired ways (and I am not sure that this is so), there are good reasons for qualified optimism about our ability to change those policies in important respects.

1. Capitalist systems are even more diverse and complex than Communist systems. Again and again Marxists and socialists have had to learn that the institutions of countries like the United States are resilient enough to defeat their ominous predictions. Not only does even formal democracy make a significant difference, not only are our precariously established civil liberties nevertheless real, not only do many of the policies adopted by powerful interests for their own selfish reasons have unanticipated but beneficial consequences; but the powerful groups that constitute our "power elite" often have different and competing interests. And this fact is often reflected in conflicting ideas about foreign policy.

Not just the poor or those concerned about civil rights, but also those concerned about urban development, education, health, old-age, and conservation must view with considerable misgiving the existing budgetary priorities. They would like to lay their hands on the sums being allocated for the Vietnam War—especially when they are doubtful that that war really is required for the protection of America's vital interests.

The strategic possibility that presently exists for altering the course of events is greater than most opponents of Administration policies realize. For increasingly even the hawks are implicitly acknowledging that the war does not serve our vital interests. Conservative hawks like Senators Richard Russell and John Tower argue that we should either step our commitment up in order to finish the job quickly, or get out. But if they are serious about the latter, then they must believe that getting out would not jeopardize American security. And liberal hawks like senatorial aspirant G. Mennen Williams argue that—though we should support the President's present policy of restrained militarism, because American security is at stake—if free elections bring to power a Vietnamese government that asks the United States to leave, we should exit quietly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As he admits that we may be obligated to leave prior to having crushed the "aggression," he is implicitly conceding that our intervention may not be essential to American security after all. Otherwise, as a patriotic and responsible American, he could not seriously contemplate leaving the field to the Communists *under any conditions.* The incoherence of both groups of hawks make them very vulnerable to attack within the framework of conventional politics. The opportunities for those prepared to practice the politics of radical pressure with skill and determination are great.

2. Even if a power elite exists, there is little reason to suppose that its members have identical interests or even perceive developments in precisely the same ways. Let us suppose, for the purposes of argument, that men like Johnson and Kennedy, Goldwater and Hatfield, Curtis Le May and James Gavin are all members of this power elite. Let us even admit that their theoretical differences are at best marginal. It remains true that those slight differences are translatable into policy differences that could have momentous consequences for human civilization. The difference between nuclear holocaust and even a succession of brush-fire wars is no small matter. It does, after all, make sense in such circumstances to support men and positions with whose general outlook we disagree. For them to ascend to power might mark the difference between total disaster and less fateful evil.

At the same time the politics of radical pressure require that struggle should proceed on two levels. Not only must we make the best of the available and defective alternatives in the short run, but we must strive to insure that the options that exist in the long run are much wider than is presently the case. We must work to create a "new (liberal) politics," to elect a more sensible Administration in 1968, to bring pressure on the Nervous Nellies who speak in the accents of the doves but embrace the policies of the hawks, to strengthen the hand of the present Administration against the pressures of the super-hawks—and we must work for all these things simultaneously. For success in each case could mark a fateful difference. It is callously glib, even inhuman, to claim that between, say, Senator Kennedy's views and President Johnson's, or between Johnson's and Goldwater's, there is nothing to choose. To take such positions is to abandon all effort to make intelligent discriminations—to abandon the traditions of reason.

3. Finally, as C. Wright Mills recognized when he was not completely bemused by his theory of the power elite, there are many who manage to have acquired reason and the capacity for morally autonomous judgment despite the faults of existing social conditions. That they re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tain these powers of mind and spirit despite the tremendous effort to undermine them made by men who, like President Johnson, identify responsible dissent with lack of masculinity is a tribute not only to the strength of the dissenters, but also to a social system resilient enough to enable them to stand firmly against great power. The system that permits such things to happen possesses potentialities which, if more fully exploited, would increase the amount of opposition. When all the evils of the American social system have been counted, a moment should be spared to count its virtues.

There are thus degrees of political freedom that are not always acknowledged by those who prefer rather to denounce the system and make an occasional dramatic noise than to work persistently and carefully toward achievable policy goals. There are also certain tactics that more persistent individuals embrace, tactics that ought to be repudiated because they are self-indulgently self-defeating.

It is not inconsistent for someone to stress the likelihood of progressive change within diverse Communist societies, and yet for tactical and moral reasons to refuse to associate with domestic Communists in certain ways. As Irving Howe recently put it, the Communists have a right to their own house, but not a right to exist in mine (nor, for that matter, as tightly disciplined Communist parties have long made clear, for me to exist in theirs). Those who deny that their moral commitments are relevant to the forms of association they embrace or who weaken their tactical position by self-righteously proclaiming that exclusion of Communists is in principle repugnant, have in effect succumbed to a form of inverted McCarthyism. Without intending to, or even being aware of it, they permit their thought and action to be contaminated by the mindless anti-Communism it is their aim to combat. It is, after all, possible to possess both courage and moral integrity without being foolish.

Similarly, whether one likes it or not, patriotism is a force with which those who hope to effect desirable political aims must reckon. To flaunt this sentiment by forms of protest that do little more than confirm one's own masculinitiy is the counterpart of that which makes the tough guys in government reject counsels of reason and morality.

Moreover, as I argued earlier, some patriotic concerns are legitimate. Unless one is prepared to match revolutionary deed to revolutionary rhetoric, Americans have an obligation to give weight to national prestige and other short-range *national* interests. Give weight—no more. Only one who willfully wishes to distort this point will insist that its

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

admission capitulates to powerful political forces it has been the main business of this essay to criticize.

Finally, as I indicated in the last section, the tactics and strategies that have proved so successful in the struggle for civil rights do not, in general, provide an appropriate model for the politics of foreign policy. Too often, however, the important dissimilarities have been ignored; the tactics of the civil rights movement, casually, and fruitlessly, applied to the fight for a better foreign policy. Perhaps the most important difference is the vital role civil rights direct-action techniques have played in dispelling the fear of those oppressed, the apathy of the convinced. But the problem in foreign policy is primarily that of convincing the unconvinced. Moral argument and appeal to self-interest are the most effective means of achieving these aims. The more dramatic forms of protest are likely to prove self-defeating. On the other hand, I do not want to deny that the tactics of the civil rights movement may be useful, especially when, as in the case of the teach-ins, they are creatively modified. I want to insist only that their use ought to be based on careful tactical calculations.

Liberals are opposing Administration policies in increasing numbers. This is so despite their instinctive aversion both to repudiating the policies of a liberal Administration and the form some opposition has taken. But their change of heart will prove futile unless they steer a coldly reflective course between self-indulgence and pseudo-realism. The fate of their nation, of mankind itself, may depend on the resoluteness with which they affirm their independent commitments and the effectiveness with which they practice the politics of radical pressure.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HELP BUILD THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT!

We ask your participation in a new venture whose goal is the reinvigoration of the "democratic Left" as an intellectual force in America.

An important move in this direction has just been taken—the coming together of the League for Industrial Democracy and DISSENT.

The League for Industrial Democracy has long been an outstanding American educational organization dedicated to increasing democracy in our economic, political and cultural life.

The expansion of the League's program in the past year has included a Leadership Training Institute in Harlem, more frequent publication of pamphlets and occasional papers, and increased activity in the student movement.

Greater opportunities lie before us.

WE
NEED YOUR
SUPPORT

LEAGUE FOR INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY
112 East 19th Street
New York, N. Y. 10003

☐ Please send me further information about the L I D.

☐ Enclosed please find my check of $..... for a ..... membership in the L I D

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

Student	$1.00
Active	$7.50
*Contributing	$10.00
*Sustaining	$25.00
Life	$100.00

*Includes a one-year subscription to DISSENT.

JOIN THE LID

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

* *Politics of Poverty*
* *Automation and Labor*
* *College as Rat Race*
* *American Interventionism*
* *Protest*

...all part of the significant dissent in

The Radical Papers

Edited by Irving Howe

This acute and thoughtful collection of essays assembled by the editors of *Dissent* magazine reflects the world view of American radical thinkers in the tradition of democratic socialism and proposes a number of concrete reforms in American society. The authors' conviction that dissent (even among themselves) is a major force for change in a free society makes THE RADICAL PAPERS a provocative companion volume to THE LIBERAL PAPERS and THE CONSERVATIVE PAPERS. Among the authors: Michael Harrington, Bayard Rustin, Harvey Swados, Paul Goodman, Christopher Jencks, George Lichtheim. $5.95 at all booksellers.

DOUBLEDAY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED